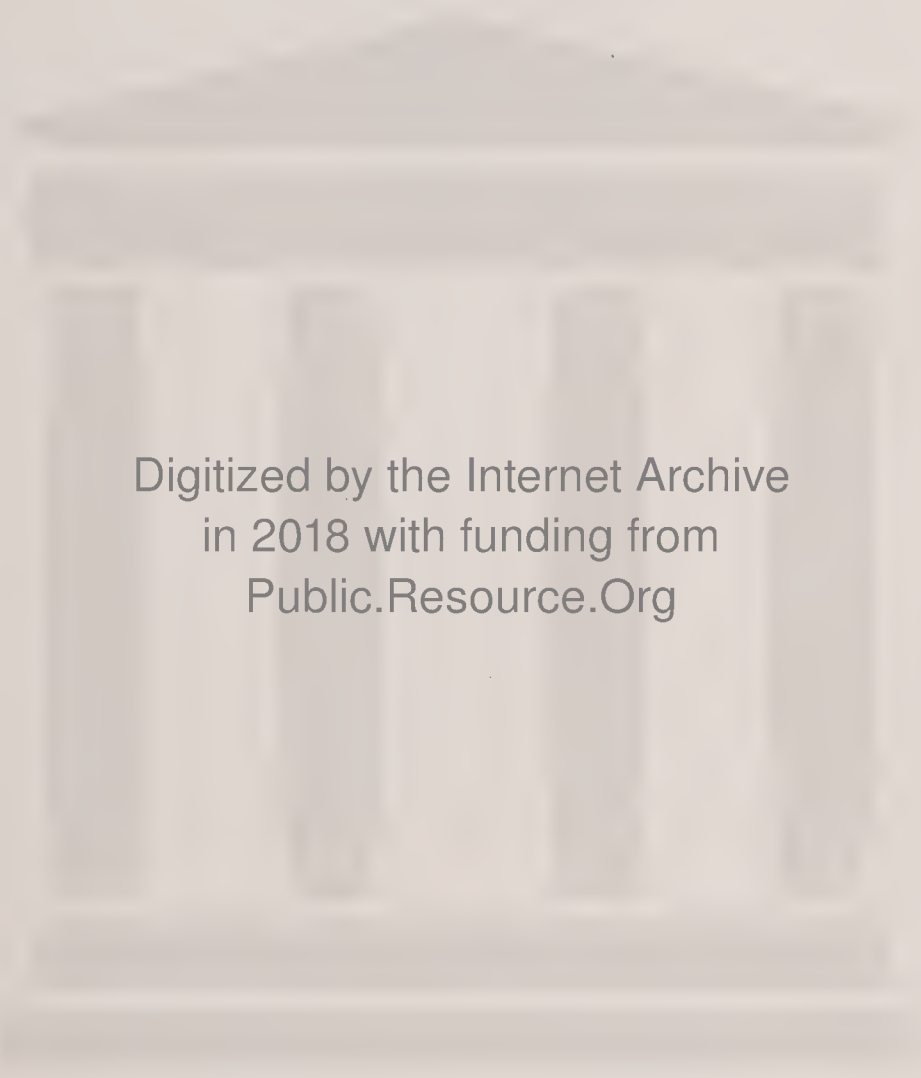


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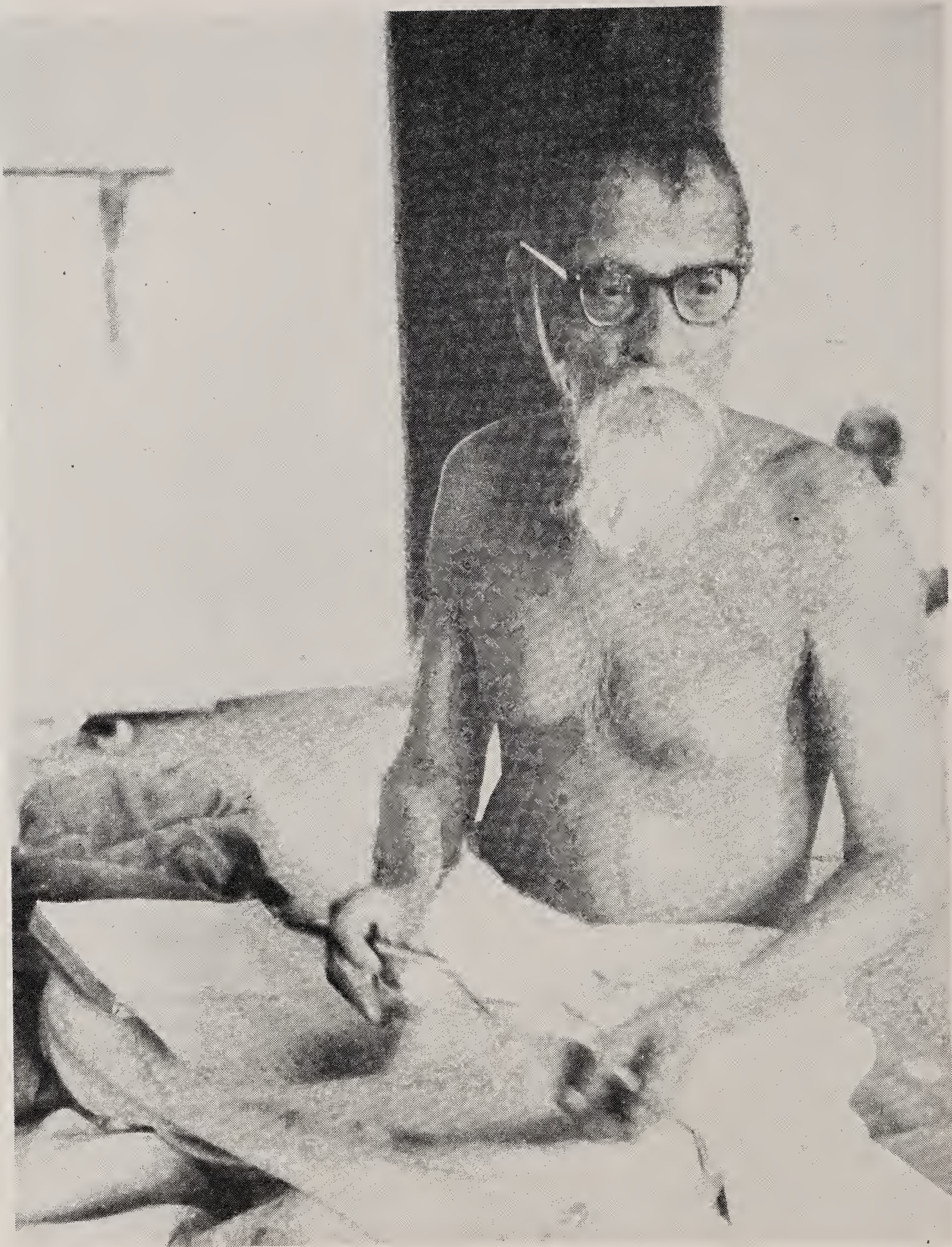
**ACHARYA VINOBA BHAVE**

VISHWANATH TANDON





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# **Acharya Vinoba Bhave**

**Vishwanath Tandon**

**PUBLICATIONS DIVISION**

MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING  
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## About the series

THE OBJECT OF this series is to record, for the present and future generations, the story of the struggles and achievements of the eminent sons and daughters of India who have been mainly instrumental in our national renaissance and the attainment of Independence. Except in a few cases, such authoritative biographies have not been available.

The biographies are planned as handy volumes written by knowledgeable people and giving a brief account, in simple words, of the life and activities of the eminent leaders and of their times. They are not intended either to be comprehensive studies or to replace the more elaborate biographies.

The work of writing these lives has to be entrusted to different people. It has, therefore, not been possible to publish the biographies in a chronological order. It is hoped, however, that within a short period all eminent national personalities will figure in this series.





## Preface

THIS BOOK ON the life and work of Acharya Vinoba Bhave has been a quest for me, though I have been interested in his thought and activities for the last forty years. Still it cannot be claimed that the search is at all complete. Vinoba is too vast and too deep a subject for a complete search by a person like me whose efforts have only been directed towards understanding him intellectually. If I undertook to prepare this book, it was only because some persons who had been close to Vinoba had suggested my name to the late Dr R.R. Diwakar, the General Editor of this series, for writing this book, and wanted me to accept the offer and they were prepared to co-operate with me in this endeavour.

In preparing this book, I have been greatly helped by several books, already available on Vinoba's life and work. My greatest debt, from this viewpoint, is to Kalindi's *Ahimsa Ki Talash* which gives Vinoba's autobiographical reminiscences in his own words, and then follow Baburao Joshi's *Tapodhan Vinoba*, Shriman Narayan's *Vinoba: His Life and Work*, Suresh Ram's *Vinoba and His Mission*, Vasant Nargolkar's *The Creed of Saint Vinoba* and a few others, including *Vinoba, Vyaktitva Aur Vichar*, a publication of Sasta Sahitya Mandal, New Delhi. Except for Kalindi's work, none covers the period beyond the Bihar Storm Campaign for Gramdan (1965-1969) and that too has

only been dealt with by Shriman Narayan cursorily. Hence for that campaign and the later period, I had mostly to rely on the various Sarvodaya periodicals in English and Hindi, especially the later, and on *Maitri*, a monthly published by the Brahma Vidya Mandir, Paunar, Wardha. A solitary book which proved of great help to me for the speeches of Vinoba during the Storm Campaign was Suresh Ram's *Towards Total Revolution*.

There were several matters which required either clarification or more detailed information. In this I received full co-operation of Shri Shivaji Maharaj, the brother of Vinoba, Kalindi Bahan of the Brahma Vidya Mandir, Sarvashri Balbhai and Jayadevabhai who had worked as Vinoba's secretaries, Shri Ranjit Desai of Paramdham Prakashan, Paunar, Shri Narendra Dube, Secretary, Acharyakul and Khadi Mission, and of Shri Achyut Deshpande who has been quite close to Vinoba and was among those who had attended his famous talks on the Gita, delivered in Dhulia Jail in 1932. To all of them, I would like to express my deep sense of gratitude. Shri Achyut Deshpande has also been a source of constant encouragement to me throughout the preparation of the manuscript and my gratefulness to him is still greater.

The late Dr R.R. Diwakar had not only recommended my name to the Publications Division for writing this book, he also took interest in its preparation and his advice was always available to me whenever I sought it. Since he is now no more, my gratitude to him is all the more.

I would also like to thank Dr Razi Ahmad, Director, National Gandhi Museum and Library, New Delhi, Shri H.S. Mathur, Librarian, and Shri M. Tiwari, Assistant Librarian, for their help in making books and periodicals readily available to me, to Shri N. Vasudevan, Director, Gandhi Book House, Rajghat, New Delhi, for his advice and help in the preparation of the manuscript, to Shri C.A. Menon,

Chairman, Delhi State Gandhi Smarak Nidhi, for his useful suggestions and for going through the typescript, to Shri Gautam Bajaj for his copyright photo of Vinoba and to Mrs. Praveen Kapur of the Gandhi Peace Foundation, New Delhi, for typing the manuscript.

Lastly, my thanks are due to the Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, for the confidence placed in me for preparing this manuscript.

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**Vishwanath Tandon**



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## Introduction

ACHARYA VINOBA BHAVE, generally called Vinobaji or Vinoba who succeeded Gandhi to the leadership of his constructive work movement, primarily aimed at building a new India of Gandhi's dream. He shot into fame as the father of the Bhoodan Movement and was also his spiritual heir. There is, however, no such declaration of Gandhi in its favour as it was in the case of Jawaharlal Nehru whom he named as his political heir. The reason is obvious. Gandhi wanted to leave no sect after him and hence the question of a declared spiritual heir did not arise at all. But there is enough indirect evidence in its support. Gandhi evaluated Vinoba's spiritual attainments very high, attached highest value to his views, and, according to Shriman Narayan, even looked upon him as his superior in certain aspects. That is why during his own life-time Vinoba was treated as such by those who were near to him and knew him. Gandhi's nomination of him as the first satyagrahi in the Individual Satyagraha of 1940 only set a seal on it.

Kaka Kalelkar, who was ten years senior to Vinoba in age and knew him as a student, considered him 'senior-most' amongst the Gandhians, and K.G. Mashruwala who succeeded Gandhi as the editor of his Harijan Weeklies after his death and was a reputed interpreter of his thought, felt that Vinoba had understood Gandhi best.

While nominating him as the first satyagrahi in 1940, Gandhi had to write a special article introducing him to the country. This was so because despite all his spiritual attainments and intensive constructive work at the grassroot level, Vinoba believed in reducing himself to zero. He says in his *Abhang Vraten*, "Vinya is a non-being like zero of Mathematics. The master or *Guru* is one and unique whose esteem grows by the addition of zeros." It were the force of circumstances, the compulsion of events, that made him leave his cell of Wardha after the passing away of the Master and assume the leadership of the constructive workers, spread all over the country. He himself had once observed: "If Gandhiji were alive today, I would have never appeared before the public as I do today, but would have concentrated all my attention on village sanitation."

To have a more concrete understanding of the greatness and importance of Vinoba, one may first know the opinion Gandhi held of him, even when he was in his early twenties. On Vinoba's joining his Ashram in 1916, Gandhi wrote to his father, "Your son Vinoba is with me. He has acquired at so tender an age such high spiritedness and asceticism as took me years of patient labour to do." And next year he told C.F. Andrews during his visit to Sabarmati: "He (Vinoba) is one of the few pearls in the Ashram. They do not come like others to be blessed by the Ashram, but to bless it, not to receive, but to give." And this impression of Gandhi only grew with years.

Jawaharlal Nehru, who met Vinoba for the first time at the Sevagram Constructive Workers Conference held after the death of Gandhi in March 1948, looked to him for guidance and confirmation of his viewpoints. He once said "Whenever I am in difficulty about a problem, I think of Gandhiji. But since Bapu is no more, my thoughts invariably turn to Vinobaji, whom I regard as the best interpreter of Gandhian thought and tradition." Jayaprakash Narayan's high opinion of Vinoba is testified by his remark: "Revolutionary and



path-finding thinkers in history have usually been followed by mere interpreters, systematisers, analysts. There have been rare exceptions as Rosa Luxemburg and Lenin in the case of Marx. Vinoba is such an exception in the case of Gandhi." It is even reported that he always used to touch Vinoba's feet because of his highest respect for him.

Vinoba, as indicated earlier, emerged on the Indian scene in 1940 and became a world figure with the birth of his unique Bhoodan Movement in the early fifties. His fame then travelled far and wide, bringing many foreigners to this country to have a close look at the man and his movement. Many articles appeared about him in well-known periodicals of the English-speaking world and also a few books, including one in French. He was admired for the originality of his ideas, for their clarity and for his knowledge of many languages. Hallam Tennyson, a great-grandson of the famous poet, rightly said of him: "Like a candle lit at a neighbouring flame, he now burns with a steady and separate light." And Donald Groom, a British Quaker knowing Vinoba very well, wrote: "Vinoba sitting looks a picture of frailty. But speaking he becomes a picture of vitality, power, humour, goodwill. In that frail body is a vital spirit which moves him to creative action and gives him an inspiration which moves men." Arthur Koestler characterized the Bhoodan Movement "the greatest peace revolution since Gandhi", and Louis Fischer saw in it "the most creative thought coming out of the East".

What is even more significant is that many common people outside India too were attracted towards him. Some came to accompany him in his *padayatra* (foot-journey) and to experience life in his Ashram. Some still visit his Ashram now and then when he is no more. Then there were some who didn't visit India at all but held him in great regard. An example of it is provided by one M.P. Perret, an assistant station master in France, who wrote a poem on him and sent it to the Indian Embassy. It has been translated in English as follows:

The previous evening, he had addressed the silent crowd  
 Of villages, and reminded them that one should be  
 capable of giving  
 Not only the necessary but everything,  
 To those who have nothing but hope.  
 Now, distributing the land  
 He gave new life to the great Indian hopes  
 And everyone watched this, felt that Gandhiji was  
 walking again,  
 And smiled at the people he cherished.

Night has come again; and tomorrow  
 When birds will be singing again in the fragrant dawn,  
 Like the river, which can never be stopped,  
 Vinoba will be on the road again . . .

Formal international recognition also reflected itself in the form of the Magsaysay Award in 1958, and on this occasion Ellsworth Bunker, the then USA Ambassador to India, described Vinoba as "a saint who compresses into a small body and great spirit the essence of ancient Indian tradition." He also once said: "Although the Bhoodan Movement and the Sarvodaya have developed along the dusty road of Indian countryside, the implications of the Acharya's philosophy have great political meaning in the international scene." Bertrand Russell while inviting Vinoba to participate in the Anti-nuclear March in London in 1962, said that "it seems to me that you have come to symbolise the role of conscience in human affairs".

Vinoba had been a nationalist no doubt, but his nationalism, like that of Gandhi, had been of the highest order. Really speaking, he was a "universal man", "a citizen of the world", who made no distinction of any kind between individuals and who never thought in terms of group, class or national loyalties. He had studied with reverence the scriptures of nearly all religions and found with Arnold Toynbee and Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan the same moral

preaching in them all. He once expressed his philosophy of life thus: "We are universal men. We pride not on any one country, we insist not on any one religion, nor do we enchain ourselves to any one sect or caste. To roam about in the garden of world's best thoughts will be our diligent study, to digest them will be our constant endeavour and to eliminate their contradictions will be our unfailing creed. To develop an attitude of universalism by synthesizing the peculiarities will be our endeavour in the realm of thought."

Such had been Vinoba, a combination of a sage and a saint, whose life, work and thought are the subject of this book. Gandhi's ideas are proving much more relevant today than were realized during his life-time, and their relevance is bound to increase if mankind is to save itself from either nuclear war or ecological disaster. The same is true of Vinoba, who creatively interpreted and expounded his ideas in the changed conditions of the post-war world in general and Indian conditions in particular. Vasant Nargolkar correctly wrote in 1962: "The significance of Vinoba's life and teachings . . . to the modern world is exactly this, that persons like him illustrate in their lives, the stage, the whole of mankind has to reach some day." and he further added: "It may justly be said of him that, though he lives amongst us, he belongs to the future." This future may not be far off, since the world is changing at rapidly accelerating pace.



## *Childhood and Influences*

ACHARYA VINOBA BHAVE, whose original name was Vinayak Narhari Bhave, was born in a Brahmin family on 11 September 1895 in village Gagoda in the Kolaba district of Maharashtra. His father's name was Narhari Shambhuroo Bhave. His mother Rukmini Devi belonged to a Godbole family of Karnataka. She called him 'Vinya'. Vinoba was the name given to him in the Sabarmati Ashram by one Mama Phadke in the Maharashtrian manner of naming saints.

Gagoda was a small village situated in natural surroundings, providing the child Vinoba love for nature which persisted with him till his end. Bhaves were the only Brahmin family of the village. The family originally belonged to Ratnagiri district from where it first moved to village Limb in Satara district and then to Wai. Gagoda was given to the family for services rendered to the British under the Peshwa's behest. Later some family members had shifted from Wai to Gagoda. However, Shambhuroo, Vinoba's grandfather, often used to go and live for some time at Wai, where there was a Shiva's temple built by the family.

Shambhuroo had three sons—Narharirao, Gopalrao and Govindrao. Narharirao, Vinoba's father, was the eldest. Vinoba had three brothers and one sister, all younger to him. They were Balkrishna (Balkoba), Shiva (Shivaji), Dattatreya and Shantatai. Dattatreya had died in childhood, while Shantatai

did not survive her marriage for long. After their last child born in 1912, Narharirao and Rukmini Devi had started observing married *brahmacharya*, chastity. Balkoba and Shivaji drew inspiration from Vinoba to take to life-long *brahmacharya*. Shivaji, the youngest, lives at present in the Paunar Ashram of Vinoba in Wardha district and is a source of inspiration to its inmates. He is a philologist and a great scholar of Marathi and Sanskrit, and had set up a good library for study and research at Dhulia, where he formerly lived.

Balkoba, who had also joined Gandhi, lived both at Sabarmati and Sevagram, and later became the Director of the Nature Cure Clinic established by Gandhi at Urulikanchan, near Pune. He, however, used to stay at Paunar Ashram for six months in a year to guide the inmates of the Brahma Vidya Mandir, established there for women by Vinoba in 1959. He died at Urulikanchan in August 1980, i.e. two years before Vinoba and "breaking the queue", as Vinoba had put it.

Vinoba's father was a textile technologist who, in the beginning, had served in the Dyeing Department of Buckingham Mills and was credited with producing the first Khaki cloth. Later he shifted to Baroda permanently and served as a senior typist-clerk in a government office. However, his interest in dye technology and a scientific attitude towards life persisted with him. He lived alone at Baroda till 1903. Afterwards he shifted his family there.

Gagoda had no school and Vinoba's early education, starting in 1901 with his sacred thread ceremony, was consequently carried on at home. Thus, till the age of nine, the most impressionable period of life, he lived mainly under the influence of his grandfather and mother, his father only visiting Gagoda now and then. Of these influences the greatest was that of his mother who was extraordinarily pious, affectionate and humane. However, before dealing

with them, it needs pointing out that the influences on Vinoba are roughly divisible into two parts, the early influences and the later ones. The early influences, in his case, included the general cultural atmosphere of the Maharashtra society and the influences of his grandfather, mother and father, while the later major influences, as indicated by Vinoba himself, were those of Shankaracharya, Jnaneshwar and Gandhi, though the Jnaneshwar's influences had begun very early in 1903 when he had started reading *Jnaneshwari* in Marathi prose, which had been presented to him by his father. In this chapter, however, we are concerned with the early influences, and it will only be proper to commence with the cultural atmosphere of Maharashtra, because his grandfather and parents too were its children.

Vinoba had, during his Bhoodan days, often referred with approval the characterization of the Indian society by Lin Yutang as "God-intoxicated". This is true of the whole country with the only difference that different regions of the country show in their God-intoxication, the primary influence of their regional saints and their teachings. As far as Maharashtra is concerned, the dominating influence has been of its saints, beginning with Jnaneshwar and ending with Samartha Guru Ramdas. Vinoba had once reminisced that the women of his village while performing their morning family chores, would be singing the *abhanga*, the devotional songs, of these saints. This was still truer of his mother, who knew so many devotional songs including those of Saint Purandardas of Karnataka, that once on Vinoba's demand she had been singing to him new songs everyday continuously for six months. As such, the whole Maharashtrian society was then, much more than it is now, surcharged with the teachings of these saints, and the child Vinoba imbibed them from the very beginning. Of these saints, Prof. R.D. Ranade has said: "Jnandeva is the type of our intellectual mystic; Namdev heralds the democratic age; Eknath synthesizes the claims of worldly and spiritual life; Tukaram's mysticism is most

personal; while Ramdas is an active saint." In Vinoba one can observe the influence of all these teachers.

So much about the general climate of the Maharashtrian society. As regards Vinoba's grandfather Shambhuroao, he was a person of strong personality, highly religious-minded but without that narrowness of mind which is usually observed in most religious persons. He was generous and broad-minded. The first pickings of his mango trees would be distributed among the neighbours through the children, and only after it they would be allowed to eat them. He was also a Vaid, Ayurvedic physician, who gave medicines free. His temple was even open to Harijans on special days and the person who sang devotional songs in his temple was a Muslim. When the orthodox objected to both of these practices, his reply was: "In the eyes of God there are no Hindus or Muslims, no high or low. All are his children and equal in his eyes. I don't find anything wrong in them at all."

Highly religious, he observed his fasts strictly and when sometimes they were even broken at midnight, Vinoba was awakened to accept the *prasad*, which he would give him out of his own share, meagre though it be. He would not allow a scorpion to be killed when it was found seated on an idol since it had taken refuge with God, and in spite of his mercurial temperament, he would not get enraged at Balkoba who had sprinkled dirty water on him while he was doing his *puja*, worship, because as he told Vinoba who questioned him about it, "One must never show temper in a temple, which is the abode of God." He was so generous that the family had adopted a blind person as one of them, since he had no family member of his own to look after him.

Another incident related about him by Vinoba shows his deep psychological insight in human character. A boy once stole some jagree to eat and Vinoba's grandmother reported it to her husband, charging him of theft. But Shambhuroao said: "No, it is not theft. All that he has done is to take it



without permission. The house is his and so also the jagree. Had he asked for it, he would have got it. He only took it without asking. It is no theft." Then he called the boy and said to him: "Whenever you wish to have jagree, ask for it and you will get it. But did you wash your hands before taking it?". The reply being in the negative, he explained to him the need of washing and drying hands before taking such things. The boy was cured of his habit. The whole incident served as an object lesson to Vinoba who once used this technique with necessary modification to wean a boy of his smoking habit. Vinoba attributed his own piety to the influence of his grandfather.

It may also be mentioned here that Vinoba's grandmother Gangabai was a lady of great determination who learnt reading and writing at the age of fifty-five. She had a great sense of humour and could mimic others well, creating peals of laughter. After Shambhuraao's death, she left home and passed the rest of her life at Varanasi.

However, as already indicated, it was his mother's influence that moulded Vinoba most. He once said: "There is nothing to compare with the influence exercised on me by my mother. I have been associated with several good and pious persons. I have read the writings of several great men and they are full of experiences. But if I put all these on one side of a balance and in the other the lessons I learnt from her of concrete devotion, this other side will outweigh the former." Vinoba used to recall many incidents connected with her, and whenever he remembered her, his voice got choked and tears rolled down his eyes. He jotted down in his *Vichar Pothi*, a book of random thoughts: "Mother, none else has given me what you gave me. But even you, while alive, did not give me what you are giving after your death."

She was an extraordinary mother who, instead of dissuading Vinoba from taking a vow of life-long *brahmacharya*, encouraged him to do so. She had great faith

in Vinoba and was fully confident that he would never do anything wrong. Vinoba once said: "My mother was a source of strength. She had unlimited confidence in my capacity. That living faith of hers gave me immense strength." When Vinoba, as we shall see later, left his house in search of the Eternal and his father consoled her saying that he would soon return, she told him that Vinoba, having once taken a decision, would never go back. And when other women would tell her that the boys these days didn't care for their parents, she would retort that her son had not forsaken her for any wrong objective. He never acted wrongly.

It was from her that Vinoba imbibed many basic precepts of his life, including the one which has inspired his Bhoodan Movement. It was "He who gives is a God; but he who withholds is a devil." Some others stressed a life of great simplicity and non-possession, the need of prayer even when life was dedicated to the service of the country, hearing only the stories of gods and saints, and not to treat the untouchables as low since God himself had once taken the form of Vittyā Mahar, and so on. No beggar would return from her house empty-handed, and to Vinoba's objection that it was encouraging idleness, her reply was: "Vinya, the beggar who comes at our door is God in person. Who are we to distinguish between the deserving and the non-deserving?" If some neighbouring woman was ill, she would prepare food for her own family first and then go to help her in cooking. When Vinoba, in order to tease her, pointed out to her that it implied her greater concern for her own family, she laughed and said: "If I prepare their food first, it would get cold. I prepare their food later so that they get warm food. It is not selfishness but altruism."

After feeding her family members, she would do her daily worship. She would pray before the idol of Annapurna with folded hands and say: "O! Ruler of the whole universe, I seek pardon for all my shortcomings!" And as she would utter these words, tears would flow from her eyes, and it was only

after this prayer that she would take her meals. The tears which flowed then showed how deeply and genuinely she had sought the pardon. Many such inspiring incidents were related by Vinoba from time to time, but it is not possible to give them all here. It will suffice to say that his mother taught him by concrete examples how to conduct himself in life. While engaged in work all day, she would never forget God and seemed to be living in another world. Vinoba remembered many of her songs in which she would forget herself, though her hands would be doing some work mechanically.

She respected her husband, but had greater faith in Vinoba's understanding. Once she resolved to offer one lakh rice grains to the deity. She did it every day after counting them. Narharirao observed this and suggested her to take ten grams of rice, count them and then by calculating take as much rice as would number one lakh grains plus some more and offer it to the deity. Her heart did not accept it but she could not think of any satisfactory reply to give to her husband. So she questioned Vinoba about it, who said: "What you are doing is not a matter of arithmetic. It concerns devotion. The real aim is to take the name of God with every grain. Therefore, weighing would not do." This fortified her and she confronted her husband with that reply.

She died in 1918. On the news of her serious illness, Vinoba reached Baroda at the behest of Gandhi, since, besides her, his father and the youngest brother were also down with influenza, which was raging then in an epidemic form. Even at that time she had demanded an explanation from Vinoba as to why he had come leaving the work of the Ashram. She could not be saved and died a very peaceful death. Vinoba had inquired of her if her mind was fully at peace and her reply was in the affirmative since Vinoba was there to look after his brothers. Vinoba, however, did not attend her last rites, because he wanted to perform all of them himself without the customary intervention of any priest

but his father could not agree to it. Hence he stayed at home and after bath read the *Gita* and *Upanishads* and also started from that day the study of the Vedas which continued till 1969.

After her death, Vinoba had brought two things of her with him as mementos—the idol of Annapurna she used to worship and a costly *sari*. He handed over the idol to a niece-in-law of Gandhi for daily worship, while he kept the *sari* with himself and used to keep it near his head when sleeping. It was a mill-made *sari*, which, when he took to Khadi, was consigned to river Sabarmati.

The third natural influence on him was that of his father. Though not visible in the beginning, it can be observed in the later life of Vinoba. A rationalist, Narharirao had a scientific outlook towards life, characterised by punctuality, love of tidiness, very regulated diet in keeping with his two diseases of diabetes and piles besides self-control in other matters, and great freedom from worldly attachments. He believed in self-reliance and would not permit his wife and children to do his personal work. He lived all alone in Baroda after the death of his wife, and did not even inform his sons of his last illness. It was by an accident that a friend went to see his father and Vinoba came to know of it from him. He informed Shivaji of it, who insisted on bringing him to Dhulia, where he died in October, 1947. Vinoba who was present there performed his last rites himself and much against the custom of immersing the ashes in some sacred river, he followed the “Vedic custom” of returning the ashes to the earth by burying it in the premises of the house and planting *tulsi* over it.

Vinoba used to tell many incidents of his life. While living in Gagoda, his mother once told him that when his father would come at Deepavali, he would bring sweets for him. When Narharirao came, he handed over a packet to Vinoba, which instead of sweets contained the children’s editions of *Ramayan* and *Mahabharat*. His mother then told him that no

better sweets could have been brought for him. This incident shows how his father was interested in the formation of his sons' character. If he had to explain anything to them, he did it in a rational manner. But he was a strict father, and quite often he beat Vinoba for some mischief or untidiness. But the beating too was scientific and care was taken that bones were not hurt. And this beating stopped all of a sudden when Vinoba attained the age of sixteen. This was in accordance with the command of the *Manusmriti* that a son above sixteen should be treated as a 'friend'.

Narharirao was highly interested in chemistry and music. Dyes were a special field in which he carried out many research experiments. A believer in scientific progress, he was highly pleased when the first textile mill was started in Baroda, and he appreciated the formation of the All India Village Industries Association by Gandhi in 1935. He even once came to Maganwadi at Gandhi's invitation and after inspecting the activities carried on there, had advised that the pulp for hand-paper should be prepared mechanically. This was not heeded then because of the enthusiasm for carrying out every process by hands, but it was adopted later. Once he even wrote a letter using paper, ink and pen prepared by him. In accordance with his habit, Vinoba did not keep it, but later he felt that he should have preserved that letter.

His interest in music had made him devote the last thirty years of his life to its study and learning. He practised singing for fourteen hours per day and got two books on music published at his own expense. When he died, he left behind the manuscripts of some eight or ten books deserving publication. He was also fond of playing chess, but he played it exactly for half an hour, and would even leave the match unfinished on the expiry of that period.

Balkoba had once questioned him on the impact of his mother's death on him. His reply was: "My health is better since your mother's death. I have been a believer in a

restrained and scientific life. Even then, I had left my one meal to her. Whatever she gave, I took, without any thought of it being suitable or not. But now I eat only what is good for my health." Vinoba was so much impressed with this reply that he was reminded of Tukaram whose feelings on the death of his wife were that while she herself had been liberated, God had also freed him of his attachment. He also once said of his father that he was a *Yogi*.

There is enough in Vinoba's life beginning with his days with Gandhi and later development of his ideas to trace his inheritance from his father. However it may be mentioned here that like all great men, Vinoba cannot be explained by merely looking at his family and other influences. He had a strong individuality of his own, characterised by certain strong inborn tendencies. He picked and chose out of his family and other social influences those which tended to strengthen those tendencies, be they of non-attachment, asceticism, a desire to attain the Supreme, love of scientific outlook and life, or any other. A strong believer in rebirth, Vinoba had once observed: "An individual has his own regular chain of *sanskar*, tendencies, and he is born of particular parents accordingly. His own regular chain constitutes one line and a second one is of family tendencies. An individual soul is born at the point of their intersection." He also held that despite all one's limitations, an individual has the potentiality, if he so wills, of breaking away from them.

## *Student Days and Home Renunciation*

WHEN NARHARIRAO BHAVE shifted his family to Baroda in 1903, a new chapter opened in the life of Vinoba. It was not only the beginning of whatever regular schooling he received, but of the new influence as well, along with the assertion of his innate individuality. It was a period when a new political temper was rising in the country, bringing in dissatisfaction at the policy of mendicancy followed by the Indian National Congress in its resolutions, prayers and petitions, which was proving ineffective. It favoured a more vigorous action which would compel the British rulers to concede the demand of the Indians. The leaders in this new temper were Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Bipin Chandra Pal, Lajpat Rai and Arvind. The partition of Bengal in 1905 had also given birth to a 'revolutionary' or terrorist movement in Bengal, which was attracting the attention of the youths in other provinces as well. Of the above leaders, Tilak was the natural leader of the youths in Baroda.

However, the first few years of Vinoba at Baroda seem to have been somewhat uneventful except for the fact that he came there more under the influence of not only his father but his mother too. Most of the incidents he related about them, including those given in the preceding chapter, belonged to this period.

Vinoba was admitted in the third standard of a Baroda school in 1903. He was a brilliant student, standing first in all annual examinations and getting merit scholarships. He left it after doing the final sixth standard examination of that school, which he must have done in 1907. His father then did not get him admitted to any school and himself taught him at home. He wanted Vinoba to become a textile technologist as he himself was in dyeing, and tried for his admission in Kala Bhawan, his old institution. But Vinoba's schooling in English was far below other candidates and he failed to gain admission. His father continued to teach him at home.

But he found that the boy was more interested in roaming for hours together than in studying at home. To discipline him, his father started giving him more work in Mathematics to keep him engaged at home, but this strategy did not work. Vinoba would solve difficult exercises and leave out the easier ones, completing his assigned work in English and Mathematics in an hour and then would go out. The father noticed it but did not scold him since Vinoba was not lagging behind in learning things, and ultimately decided to get him admitted in Baroda High School. This was in 1910 and Vinoba having matriculated from there in November 1913, joined Baroda College for his Intermediate. In the High School, French was one of the subjects which he had taken at the instance of his father against the wishes of his mother who wanted the Brahmin boy to learn Sanskrit. To this Vinoba's reaction was; "If he is a son of a Brahmin, he would pick up Sanskrit all right. It is not necessary to learn it in a school."

As a student, Vinoba had the reputation of not only being an extraordinarily intelligent but also, as of having a high and noble character. He was more interested in extra curricular studies and activities than in class teaching. If a fellow student spoke English, he would ask him in harsh tone if his mother was a white woman. If somebody pointed to him his long nails, he would inquire if he was a barber. For his school studies, he relied on what he heard in the class room, and his memory



too was so sharp that he could reproduce without taking it down what the teacher had dictated. However, he was most interested in Mathematics and was so good at it that he helped even senior students in solving their questions. And not only that, even the mathematics teacher would sometimes refer the matter to him.

Vinoba was a voracious reader. He had once said: "I am a student of world literature. My respect for works of literature and litterateurs is unusual." He used to read monthly magazines, leaving out stories and poems altogether and cursorily going through essays but reading articles on history, science and such other subjects in full. He had gone through all the biographies available in the Central Library of Baroda, beginning with those which commenced with alphabet 'A' and passing on to the others in the alphabetic order. He would finish even big volumes in ten or fifteen minutes. Thus he had read thousands of the best books in all the languages he knew, viz. Marathi, Hindi, Gujarati, English, French and Sanskrit. Vinoba was adept in the art of remembering the significant and forgetting the trivial. He had a knack for learning languages, which he did with the help of their philologies. In French, he had read Victor Hugo's *Les Miserables* and in English the poems of Milton, Wordsworth and Browning. He also read the English translation of Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, but only in so far that he perused the beginning and the end of it. He, however, went through its *Twenty-three Tales* completely. Of the Shakespear's plays, he had read only *Julius Caesar*, and that too because it was in his course. At that time, however, not knowing Sanskrit much, he read only the Gita, and it were the Maharashtra saints who influenced him most. He then knew by heart some ten thousands *ovis* (couplets) and devotional songs.

Even at that stage Vinoba gave proofs of his fearlessness and independent mindedness. To superficial eyes he looked to be an eccentric because of his unconventional manners and dress. An incident in this context is worth mentioning.

One summer, he was reading in the Central Library with his shirt removed. A clerk objected to it and told him, "This is not the way to dress in public. It needs some brains to know and observe the etiquette." To this Vinoba's sharp reaction was: "God has been generous to me, Sir, in this respect. I dress myself in this way, because I use my God-given brain." The matter was reported to the Librarian who was an Englishman and Vinoba was summoned. The Librarian was sitting under a fan with his coat and hat off. He asked the standing Vinoba, "Don't you know what good manners are?" Vinoba replied, "Yes I do." The librarian then asked, "Then, may I know what they consist in?" Vinoba's reply to it was: "We consider it, for example, good manners in our country to offer a seat to anyone we are talking to, if there is a chair around." The librarian was taken aback, but being kind-hearted he immediately offered Vinoba a chair and wanted to know the reason for his quaint manner of dress. Vinoba explained to him how customs and manners differed from country to country, and said: "It is healthy and convenient in this hot country of ours not to overdress oneself, especially during summers. Besides, it is quite good manner too." The librarian was impressed by his boldness and logic and let him go.

Another incident of the period revealing Vinoba's character pertains to the celebration of Shivaji's birthday, highly popularised by Tilak in Maharashtra. Vinoba's group consisting of ten to fifteen students resolved to celebrate it, and in accordance with Vinoba's suggestion decided to do so outside the school in an open place. It being no holiday, they selected the history period for it, though it involved absence from that class and a fine of twenty-five paisa, a very big sum those days, on each of them. Vinoba had advised them to bring that amount with them in the class to pay the fine. Next day the teacher inquired of the reason for their absence and on learning it asked why they did not celebrate it in the school. Vinoba's reply was that the birthday of a freedom-loving man

like Shivaji could not, in the fitness of things, be observed in the school. On being fined for absence, they all paid it then and there.

Vinoba who generally kept silent in the class, was quite frank and open amongst his group. They were all keen to serve the country, and towards this purpose a study circle, called *Vidyarthi Mandal*, was formed in 1914. Vinoba played a leading role in the Mandal without taking up any office in it, showing thereby his lack of liking for organisation. When once pressed to accept an office, his reply was, "Making me the organiser of some institution is like appointing Tukaram to the post of a bank manager." The Mandal meetings used to be held in the beginning at the house of one or other member but later a room was taken on rent at four or five annas (25 or 30 paise) per month, which Vinoba, in the beginning, used to procure from his mother but later on the members subscribed towards it. This room was also utilised for a library of some 1600 books established by the Mandal. Amongst its other activities were the celebrations of special days like Shivaji's birthday and the death anniversary of Ramdas. In regular meetings held on Sundays, discussions centred round the books read or on some topics of national importance. Lectures too were delivered, but it was Vinoba who mostly spoke and he was reckoned to be an excellent speaker. His one lecture on Mazzini, who had inspired many Indian patriots like Lala Lajpat Rai and the Bengal revolutionaries, used to be fondly remembered by his friends of those days. The Mandal was even in existence in 1917, when Vinoba attended its annual function and advised its members to take up the propagation of Hindi.

It may also be reiterated here that Vinoba had been greatly influenced by Tilak, and his *Gitarahasya* was his favourite book. He was greatly agitated when Tilak was sentenced to six years' rigorous imprisonment in 1908. He respected Tilak for being above provincial and other narrow loyalties, for being revered throughout the country, for

being the man of the people and for being humble enough to regard himself as dust before them.

As is apparent, Vinoba had no attraction for academic education. He had a feeling that it did not relate to life. This is not surprising since Vinoba was of an ascetic type, greatly influenced by the Maharashtra saints. At the age of ten he had vowed to a life-long *brahmacharya*, and had started leading a highly ascetic life, considered favourable for it. It included sleeping without a pillow, using blanket and mattress only, not taking food prepared for marriages, non-use of umbrella and shoes, no matter how hot the sun. He did not know earlier, but came to know later, that walking barefooted on hot sand could do harm to his eyes as they actually did. The *Dasbodh* of Samarth Ramdas had further inspired him with the idea of renouncing home, an idea strengthened by the examples of Lord Buddha and Shri Shankaracharya. It remained lodged in his mind for four years during which he examined himself thoroughly for it before finally deciding on the relinquishment of home. One day his mother found him consigning to flames his certificates and scrolls. She tried to desist him from it, pleading that they might be needed some time in future. But Vinoba gave her a confident reply that he would never be going for any service.

However, the actual renunciation came about in March 1916, while he was on his way to Bombay to appear at his Intermediate Examination along with his other friends. He parted company with them at Surat, catching the train for Bhusawal on way to Kashi or Benares (now Varanasi) with two others who had followed suit, namely, Shankarrao Tagare and Bedekar. However, he had handed over a letter to his friend Gopalrao Kale addressed to his father, with instructions that it be posted in Bombay after the examinations were over. He had written in it: "Instead of going to Bombay for the examination, I am proceeding elsewhere. You may rest assured that no matter where I go, I won't do anything unethical."

Vinoba had chosen Varanasi for two reasons. First, it was a centre of Sanskrit learning which Vinoba was very keen to study. Secondly, it lay on the way to the Himalayas and Bengal. His objective of the realization of the Supreme drew him to the former and his desire to serve the country attracted him towards Bengal where he could participate in the revolutionary movement. But reaching Varanasi, he plunged himself in the study of the Vedas and the Upanishads. He had to do it by himself since the teacher he had approached had felt that several years would be needed for that study, while Vinoba wanted to do so in two months only. At Varanasi, Vinoba and his companions found lodging in a third storey of a house in Durgaghat, took their mid-day meals in a charitable kitchen of a temple, where they also received two paisa as *dakshina*, which were used for evening meals. Of the two friends, Tagare soon left for his house, but Bedekar was of sterner stuff and he stayed. However, despite his robust health, he fell ill and died. He was cremated by Vinoba himself in keeping with his wishes, though it was unconventional and the local Brahmins derided Vinoba for it. But he did not worry at it as was his wont.

Three incidents of this period must be mentioned. One concerned the purchase of a lock. A shopkeeper demanded a price for it which Vinoba knew was exorbitant. Vinoba told him the real price but paid him the one demanded by him. He used to pass that way everyday but he did not even look towards the shopkeeper. One day he himself called him, admitted overcharge and returned the excess amount. This incident convinced Vinoba of the transforming influence on an individual of the power of trust reposed in him.

The other two incidents are more revealing from the point of view of Vinoba's character. The first of these relate to his teaching English in a private school run by a teacher whose own English was very defective. Vinoba taught there daily for an hour or two. When asked about the payment, he demanded only two rupees per month. The teacher running

the school was surprised, and enquired if it would do. Vinoba explained to him that he did not need more since he took his meal in a charitable kitchen. He worked for two months in that school, earning thereby four rupees. This incident demonstrates the non-possessiveness of Vinoba.

The other incident concerns discussions between two groups of pandits, which was a usual feature in Benares on the bank of the river Ganga. Vinoba went there everyday and used to listen them attentively. One day the discussion was between two groups standing for *advaita* (non-duality) and *dvaita* (duality). After a long discussion, the first group won. Vinoba then stood up and sought permission to say something. He was allowed and he pronounced it a defeat for those who stood for non-duality. When asked to explain, he said that the very fact that they entered into a discussion with the other group, implied their defeat, for it meant that they themselves believed in duality. This shows that to Vinoba philosophy did not signify merely any theoretical understanding but a realization of it in life, as is implied in the Sanskrit word *darshan* used for "philosophy".

Vinoba was also in the habit of spending his evenings on the bank in meditation and in composing poems, which were consigned to the sacred river. This habit of his was not new. He also used to do it at Baroda. One day his mother had observed him doing this and desired him to show them to her now and then before consigning to fire. Subsequently he complied it.

Due to the insanitary conditions of the city, Vinoba's health suffered. His contact with some political workers and revolutionaries in the city also disappointed him because they lacked the dedication and renunciation which Vinoba expected of them. Hence he was thinking of leaving Benares for some other place. Just then he came to know of Gandhi's speech at the opening of the Benares Hindu University in February that year, a month prior to his arrival in Benares. It impressed him much and ultimately took him to Gandhi's Ashram in Ahmedabad which forms the matter of the next chapter.

## *With Gandhi in Ahmedabad*

GANDHI'S SPEECH IN the inaugural week of the Benares Hindu University which drew Vinoba to Gandhi and brought him to Ahmedabad, was truly a remarkable speech. Delivered in the presence of an array of Indian Princes, it was characterised by frankness which spoke of his extraordinary fearlessness. What particularly impressed Vinoba was Gandhi's emphasis that there could be no non violence without fearlessness, and that mental violence was worse than overt violence. So also was his advice to the Indian Princes on their vulgar display of jewels. Gandhi had said to them: "There can be no salvation for India unless you strip yourselves of the jewellery and hold it in trust for your countrymen in India." However, Vinoba had some clarifications to seek, and he did it through a letter which Gandhi replied. Then a second letter followed asking some more questions. Gandhi then suggested him to come to Ahmedabad and stay with him for some time when they would be able to talk off and on. He told Vinoba that it was the observance of life, not words, that could set all doubts at rest.

The idea appealed to Vinoba as it was accompanied by a copy of the Ashram rules which said: "The object of this Ashram is that its members should qualify themselves for, and make a constant endeavour towards the service of the

country, not inconsistent with universal welfare.” It further said that this service needed the observance of the eleven ethical vows, namely, Truth, Non-violence, *Brahmacharya* or Chastity, Control of the Palate, Non-thieving, Non-possession or Voluntary Poverty, Physical Labour, *Swadeshi*, Fearlessness, Removal of Untouchability and Tolerance. All this was something new for Vinoba to find a political leader laying emphasis on them for country’s liberation. This was what, in a way, he himself was seeking. As he once observed later: “When I was at Kashi, my main ambition was to go to the Himalayas. There was also a longing to visit Bengal. But neither of the two dreams could be realised. Providence took me to Gandhi and I found in him not only the peace of the Himalayas but also the burning fervour of revolution typical of Bengal. I said to myself that both of my desires have been fulfilled.”

Vinoba reached Ahmedabad on 7 June 1916 and went straight to the Ashram, then at Kochrab. When he met Gandhi, he was cutting vegetables, something unexpected of a political leader. This was an object lesson to Vinoba. From his talks with Vinoba, Gandhi could read in him his search for self-knowledge, and he told him that it would be a pleasure for him if he stayed in the Ashram and devoted himself to service. He also remarked: “You look physically weak. Self-knowing persons are often frail, but you appear to be ill, when such people never fall ill.” This was a second lesson for Vinoba. He decided to stay and Gandhi stood all his tests. Vinoba once said: “I don’t know if Bapu (Gandhi) ever tested me, but I did test him in my mind, and had he not stood my tests, I could not have stayed in the Ashram.”

Vinoba had not written to his father about his whereabouts. Gandhi told him that it was wrong on his part to do so, and then only Vinoba wrote to his father. Gandhi too informed him personally about it. In that letter he also called Vinayak ‘Vinoba’, setting his seal of approval to the name given to Vinayak by Mama Phadke in the Ashram. Vinoba remained



its inmate till Gandhi himself sent him to Wardha, except for a period of a year when he was on leave from the Ashram. Vinoba's life in the Ashram, first in Kochrab and then in Sabarmati where the Ashram was shifted in June 1918, was a very arduous one. He fully participated in grinding grains, watering plants with water from the river Sabarmati, scavenging, working in fields and teaching students in the *Rashtriya Shala* (National School), besides doing his own cooking and washing utensils. As hostel superintendent, he was very popular with the students, belying the fear that he might prove too strict for them. Gandhi was surprised at the immense labour put up by Vinoba, and asked him how he could cope with it. Vinoba's reply was "It is not so much my body as my will that enables me to undertake this hard work." However, his health could not escape its effects and Vinoba took a year's leave with the two objectives of completing his Sanskrit studies left halfway by his joining Gandhi and to recoup his health. But before dealing with that three episodes of the Ashram period throwing special light on his attitude and conduct must be mentioned.

On Vinoba's joining the Ashram, some of his Baroda friends had also followed suit, and so also his brother Balkoba in 1920. At that time the scavenging work used to be carried out in the Ashram by a sweeper. Once he fell sick and his 12-year old son had to deputise for him. The pots being too heavy for him, he was crying and Balkoba taking pity on him helped in that work. Some Ashramites criticised him for it and on being apprised of it, Vinoba also started doing it. Gandhi was away at that time and when he returned, the matter went to him. He supported Vinoba and ruled: "Scavenging is a good and pious work. It should now become a part of our daily routine. Those who dislike it, can leave the Ashram." And some even did so.

In the second episode, once while bathing in the river, Vinoba was carried away by a current. Instead of crying for help when in danger of being drowned, he shouted: "Convey

my *namaskars* to Bapu and tell him that though Vinoba has disappeared, his soul is immortal." Fortunately he was carried to a shallow land in midstream and he swam back safely. All, including Gandhi, were highly impressed by this equipoise of his mind even in that moment of crisis.

The third relates to the emphasis Vinoba laid on quality over quantity. As the principles of self-reliance and physical labour were more strictly enforced in the Ashram, inmates started leaving, creating problem for Magandas Gandhi who managed the Ashram. He was worried how to cope with the work. He consulted Vinoba, who advised against any relaxation of the rules and said: "Even if there are a few only willing to live according to the Ashram rules, they are better than hundreds of vacillating minds." He also suggested how the work could be reduced.

It was in February 1917 that Vinoba had proceeded on leave. He first went to Wai where a learned Sanskrit teacher of scriptures and philosophy was available and spent six months there. The last six months were spent in going on foot to places of historical interests and staying at one place for not more than three days, when he would give talks on the *Gita*. In an oft-quoted letter written to Gandhi in February 1918 Vinoba had given him a detailed report on his life and activities during this period.

In that letter, Vinoba had told him of the various books he had studied, and they included the *Upanishad*, Shankar-Bhasya of the *Brahmasutra*, *Yogasutra* of Patanjali and other books of philosophy. This had quenched his thirst for the study of scriptures and philosophy and he had felt that if he desired to read further, he could do it himself. As regards his health, he had said that in the beginning he used to walk ten or twelve miles per day, but later he took to grinding cereals from six to eight seers per day, and was at the time of writing the letter doing 300 *surya-namaskar*, a form of yogic exercise, per day. Vinoba had also given details

of his diet, especially mentioning the observance of the vow of control over palate. However, he had felt that his diet was luxurious and he sought Gandhi's instructions about it.

Regarding his other activities, he had mentioned giving free tuitions on the *Gita* to six students, teaching *Jnaneshwari* to four, *Upanishad* to two and English to two, besides propagating Hindi. He informed Gandhi that he had covered some 400 miles in visiting places of historical interests and had given talks on the *Gita* at 50 places during his tramp. He told him that he had started a Vidyarthi Mandal at Wai and established a library of some 400 books attached to it. These books had been purchased from the money earned by grinding people's cereals. He had also tried to propagate the Ashram principles, and he assured Gandhi that, though on leave, he had behaved as an Ashramite. The letter further said: "What else may I say? Will He make me a fit instrument of His service! This one desire dominates my thought even in my dreams." Gandhi was overwhelmed with emotion after reading it and he exclaimed: "He is a Goraknath who has beaten his Guru Machhendranath." Gandhi's reply was in all appreciation of Vinoba. It said: "You have scrupulously observed the Ashram observances all through. May God give you long life! May He make you an instrument of service to Hind! That is my prayer."

Vinoba returned to the Ashram exactly after a year. Gandhi had even forgotten about it. He welcomed him affectionately saying, "It shows your loyalty to truth." To this Vinoba reacted politely, "Rather, it is my loyalty to mathematics."

## *In Wardha: The Twenties*

IN APRIL 1921 Vinoba was deputed by Gandhi to assume charge of Satyagraha Ashram, Wardha, established earlier at the wish of Jamnalal Bajaj. Ramniklal Modi who held the charge earlier, had to leave it because of ill health, and the only option before Gandhi was either to close it or send Vinoba there. Gandhi was not prepared for the former, and Vinoba was sent despite all unwillingness of Magandas Gandhi who managed the Sabarmati Ashram. Having once gone to Wardha, Vinoba remained there, at one place or another, till practically 1951, when he set out on his 'Bhoodan campaign'. These thirty years, according to Vinoba himself, were devoted to constructive work, keeping in mind the basic thinking behind it. Some eleven years of them were spent in conducting the Ashram till the Government banned and locked it in January 1931 during the Civil Disobedience Movement.

Gandhi maintained touch with the progress of the Ashram and came there every year for a month's stay or so. Despite it, Vinoba may be said to have been holding an independent charge of it, with full opportunity to make his own experiments in Ashram life. Consequently, as years rolled on, Vinoba's own thinking and practice developed side by side, and by 1948 when the master was snatched away, he was in a position to take his place both as a thinker and as a constructive work leader.

Vinoba had clear ideas about Ashram life, with its emphasis on physical labour and other ethical disciplines combined with self-study, and with a view to mould its life accordingly, he had brought with him a team of two old Baroda friends and three select students. He looked upon the Ashram as a laboratory and its inmates as spiritual seekers. He was interested neither in agitational nor in parliamentary politics. Once when someone suggested after Tilak's death that he should participate in the political movement, he said that he was engaged in building up the next generation. However, in spite of this coldness towards politics, he did take part in enrolling Congress members and was elected by others to Vidarbha Congress Committee as a member. Later he gave up both on finding that the enrolled members were not comprehending its true implications and precious time of the Congress Committee was being wasted on trivial and avoidable matters.

However, before taking up his Ashram experiments, it would be better to deal with three diversions from it in the twenties. The first was his participation in the Flag Satyagraha of Nagpur in 1923. A request to direct it had compelled Vinoba to participate in it. He was arrested and sentenced to a year's imprisonment. He was first kept in Nagpur Jail and later transferred to Akola Jail. The imprisonment did not bring any change in his daily life, the Ashram routine having been strictly followed there. But his experience of jail life did make him observe: "You have seen a circus, haven't you? There men command and control animals. In a jail, it is otherwise." In Akola Jail the political prisoners were refusing to work and Vinoba reminded them of the teaching of the Gita that it was a sin to eat without working. He was able to persuade them to learn some craft and to complete all physical work assigned to them. Vinoba was released after an imprisonment of only two months along with all others.

The second Satyagraha which he had to direct at Gandhi's instance was the temple entry Satyagraha by the Harijans

against the prohibition of their entry into the temple at Vaikom which is in Kerala at present. He had been sent there with the two-fold purpose of talking to and persuading the learned Sanatanis to change their attitude who were opposed to the entry and to suggest modifications in the method of Saṅtyagraha adopted there. Vinoba failed to achieve the first objective, but he did suggest some changes in the method to make it purer. Gandhi himself visited the place later and a settlement was arrived at. Vaikom was very near the birth-place of Shankaracharya whom Vinoba held in special reverence and who had exercised some determining influence on his life. Hence he was naturally very keen to visit the place, but he did not do so since the primary motive of his coming there was different. This trait of Vinoba's character to concentrate on the work undertaken by him lasted all his life.

The third diversion was his being called to Delhi in 1924 when Gandhi was on his 21-day Hindu-Muslim Unity Fast, to read out to him some books and to recite verses in his melodious voice. And since Gandhi was too weak to address the gatherings, Vinoba was asked to speak to them daily in accordance with Gandhi's instructions. He also then delivered a series of discourses on *Kathopnishad*. On the completion of the fast, Vinoba returned to his Ashram and picked up the earlier threads without delay.

As regards Ashram life, as already hinted, besides introducing the principles of community life practised at Sabarmati, Vinoba tried to make it fully self-reliant. He made it a rule that the community would eat only what it earned by physical labour in the whole day. For years together, the evening meals were cooked only after calculating in the afternoon the anticipated total earnings of the community that day. The earnings of all were added up together and each inmate got meals according to his actual needs. Quite often there were no evening meals at all and generally they were inadequate.

All work in the Ashram was done by the inmates, including

scavenging. Vinoba too worked like others. He took his classes while cutting vegetables or cleaning cereals. For him, work could never be divorced from knowledge, and he regarded it to be the best form of worship. Experiments in diets were also conducted in the Ashram, and so also in spinning and weaving. However, despite all this, Vinoba was reluctant to impose his ideas on others. To give an instance of it, Kamalnayan, a son of Jamnalal Bajaj, had joined the Ashram on the condition that he would not be asked to do scavenging work. Vinoba had agreed to it, but he never lost any opportunity to explain to him the rationale of doing that work. As a result of it, Kamalnayan's aversion for it disappeared, and one day Vinoba saw him doing it. He was, however, perturbed and enquired of him as to who asked him to do it. He felt relieved on learning that he did it of his own accord. However, Vinoba told him that he should have informed him of the change of his mind before undertaking it. Kamalnayan admitted his mistake and the matter ended. But the whole episode shows that Vinoba did not believe in imposing his ideas on others but in allowing them to develop in their own manner and at their own pace. He would gently put his views before them and leave it there to do its work.

The ideas he propounded during this period are probably of greater importance. He started a monthly, *Maharashtra Dharma*, in January 1923. It included his articles on diverse topics. It stopped publication, however, on his participation in the Flag Satyagraha in April that year, but was resumed after his release as a weekly, and this time in a more simple and lively style suiting the common people. The earlier style was too erudite to be comprehended even by the educated. Its publication continued till 1927. These articles are important not only from the viewpoint of his thinking but also for the fact that Vinoba believed in ordering his life to the best of his ability. However, before analysing his thinking as revealed in them, it may be pointed out that in the early twenties Vinoba had made a special study of several books on Economics in English, including those of Tolstoy and

Ruskin. It was probably also at this time that he had studied *Capital* of Marx, of which he once made a mention later but without telling as to when he had done so.

The 1923 issues of *Maharashtra Dharma* had carried Vinoba's articles on the study of the Upanishads, now also available in Hindi as *Upanishadon Ka Adhyayan*. He finds in the Upanishadic teachings the absence of any contradiction between the *real* good of an individual, the social good and the Supreme Good. They teach according to him, that society is more than the sum of the individuals and, therefore, one should not act in a manner as to come into conflict with others. There should be toleration all around. Being a Brahmin does not imply that one does not belong to other *varnas*. Being a Hindu does not mean that one is not a Muslim. There is no such exclusiveness according to the Upanishads. Since all are the forms of the Supreme, they stand for goodwill for all and peace, which should not be confused with lethargy and inactivity. God incarnates Himself and works for the establishment of *dharma*, righteousness. One should act independently, with knowledge and detachment. The Upanishads begin where treatises on ethics end. Non-opposition or peace is the basic formula of life.

Some selected articles from the second series of *Maharashtra Dharma* have also been published in Hindi as *Madhukar*. These articles, in particular, lay stress on the importance of the eleven vows of Gandhi. Several of them are against untouchability and declare it to be against the tenets of Hinduism. Vinoba urges the people in them to take up the service of the untouchables, to mix with them and to inculcate hygienic habits in them. He opposes separate hostels for them and says that to save Hinduism itself, the false ego behind it must be got rid off.

Two of them deal directly with education and teachers. He advocated a close relationship between education and life at all stages, including the student period. He was highly critical



of the present system of education and the prevailing mentality of the teachers. He said, "Merely teaching implies being a corpse cut off from life. It means dead-alive teaching from a dead-alive teacher." He would like a teacher to mould his own life on the pattern of the ideal national life conceived by him. He was confident that if it happened, the teacher would emit rays of education all around and influence the environment. Such a teacher would be a school by himself and to associate with him would be to get educated.

Some of these articles emphasise non-possession. In one Vinoba differentiates between charity and renunciation, according a higher place to the latter as it strikes at the very roots of exploitation. In another he finds three types of livelihood prevailing in society—*Bhiksha*, living on alms, *Vyavasaya*, business, and *Chori*, theft. The first stands for giving more to society and taking from it the bare minimum and that too with a sense of obligation. In the second, there is a balance between giving and taking, while, in the third, taking predominates over giving. Vinoba places public servants, businessmen, teachers, lawyers and many others of today in the third category. As apparent he stands for the first, and his life had been accordingly.

Between December 1928 and March 1931, it was his practice to jot down his stray thoughts for five minutes before retiring to bed. These were later published as *Vichar Pothi*, and most of them have been translated into English as *Random Reflections*. These gems of thought reveal his mind.

So much about his life and thought during the twenties. Two revealing incidents of his life have been related above, but one more must be given here, though it may even be of the next decade. It concerns a letter to Vinoba from Gandhi. No sooner Vinoba had read it, he tore it into pieces and threw them into the waste-paper basket. Kamalnayan came to know of it from others. Out of curiosity, he picked up those pieces and arranged them to read its contents. Then he went to

Vinoba and said to him: "What right had you to tear the letter, even if it was addressed to you? If not for your sake, you should have kept it intact for the sake of posterity." Vinoba smiled and said: "Don't you see that Gandhiji committed a great blunder in calling me a great soul. And he commits even a greater blunder by comparing others with me and belittling them. This is unjust and improper. I rectified that mistake by destroying it." But Kamalnayan protested saying that Gandhi was a very good judge of men and that he was not a person to write anything in haste. To this, Vinoba's reply was: "Even if there be no mistake on his part, what use has that letter for me? Preserving it was likely to feed my ego and this would have acted as an impediment in my spiritual development. I still hold it was proper for me to have destroyed it." This episode, besides revealing Vinoba's attitude, tells us of the freedom he permitted his students to question his actions.

## *In Wardha: The Thirties*

STRICTLY SPEAKING, VINOBA'S whole life was a life of *sadhana* (spiritual efforts), but his years with Gandhi were particularly so. In the twenties while it mostly centred round the Wardha Satyagraha Ashram, in the thirties it chiefly took the form of village service. At the age of 35 his genius had begun to make its mark. It can be witnessed in his literary creation of *Gitai*, a Marathi translation of the *Gita* "in parallel verse which reproduces the haunting music of the original in an amazing degree", and in his famous *Talks on the Gita*, translated and published in all the Indian and several European languages, commanding a sale of some two million copies so far. Both were the products of the early thirties.

Before, however, dealing with them, it would be better to take up his activities which were the outer expressions of his evolving thought. The 1930s had opened with the Civil Disobedience Movement under the leadership of Gandhi, but Vinoba, a devoted constructive worker, did not participate in it since Gandhi had left it to the choice of such workers. Vinoba, however, did initiate the movement for the felling of palmyra trees in Wardha district in order to prevent the manufacture of toddy, but he was not arrested. His main activity in 1931 lay in the campaign for opening wells to Harijans in that district. He was, however, arrested in January 1932 to prevent him from addressing a public meeting in

Jalgaon, prohibited by the Government. The prohibition order had been issued after the public announcement of the meeting and Vinoba, in accordance with his temperament, was not prepared to take cognizance of it. He was sentenced and kept in Dhulia Jail where he delivered his talks on the *Gita*, already referred to. When he was released, he found his Ashram locked and banned by the Government, and he had to put up in Wardha elsewhere for two months before shifting in December 1932 to Nalwadi, a village of Harijans and agricultural labourers. Nalwadi later became a centre of his activities.

For long Vinoba had been entertaining an intense longing to serve the villages, but circumstances had not favoured it. He returned from the prison more convinced of its need for social and economic progress of the country. He felt that India was a land of villages and would remain so, and just as one worshipped in a temple by going round and round it, we must go to the villagers again and again. One should make every effort to identify oneself with them. That was the only way to serve them with dedication. By this identification Vinoba did not mean that one should adopt their faults as well.

Vinoba started going from village to village and this continued for two years, bringing out the need of some solid planning for an all round integrated service. Therefore he called a conference of constructive workers of the district and as a result of its deliberations an idea of 'Khadi Yatra' emerged. Under it, the workers used to visit villages with Nalwadi as their headquarter, meet the people as one of them and start their activities like Khadi, village industries, cow husbandry, etc. They met together at Nalwadi after every fortnight to present reports of their work and to discuss their doubts and difficulties. On these occasions, competitions in spinning, weaving and carding were held and exhibitions were organized. This programme formed part of the activities of the Gram Seva Mandal which had been formed in May

1934. Later some workers settled down in villages, and started Ashrams there. They numbered nine or ten, and Vinoba guided them through letters. His stress was more on the quality of work than on the number of workers, more on depth than extension.

Visits to villages had brought out the need of the leprosy work, which had not formed part of the Gandhian constructive programme by that time. Manohar Diwan a disciple of Vinoba was inspired to take it up, and he did so with the approval of Vinoba, who also secured his unwilling mother's consent for it. Thus was born the Maharogi Seva Mandal of Dattapur, some five kilometres from Wardha on road to Nagpur, in May 1936. In 1937, a tannery was added to Nalwadi complex and so also a workshop for the manufacture of spinning wheels and such other things.

Vinoba personally experimented with Takli, spinning on it for eight hours per day, four with one hand and four with the other. He found that this could bring to spinner some two annas (12 paise) per day. He also made several experiments on the spinning wheel and later decided to live solely on its earnings, which were highly inadequate. He did it to identify himself with the suffering spinners. This, however, led to the alleviation of their sufferings. Gandhi came to know of Vinoba's experiments and enquired of him about his earning and daily expenditure. This led to the idea of a minimum wage of eight annas (50 paise) to the spinners, which at the instance of Gandhi was first accepted by the Maharashtra Branch of All India Spinners Association and later by others. It may also be mentioned here that Vinoba used to lay much stress on *swadhyaya* or study by the workers, and he always welcomed constructive criticisms of the Gram Seva Mandal. By *Swadhyaya* Vinoba did not mean study of books one after another without any effect on one's life, but the study of such matter as lay at the base of all their activities and in addition other subjects as well. He held that real service needs not only devotion and dedication but understanding as well.

Moreover, by Swadhyaya he also meant that a worker should examine his own work like an artist who looks at his painting from a distance to find out its defect and then comes back to it to remove them.

In 1937, Vinoba played an important role in the Zakir Hussain Committee Report on Gandhi's idea of Nai Talim or Basic Education. He was a member of that Committee as an expert on Takli. As already mentioned in the preceding chapter, Vinoba was against the separation of education from life even at the so-called education stage and the Nai Talim concept of Gandhi had his full approval. His experiments with Takli helped in its being recognized as a basic craft in Nai Talim.

Gandhi had, in 1933, moved to Wardha, handing over his Sabarmati Ashram for Harijan service. This was in accordance with his resolve of 1930 not to return to it till India got freedom. With that many girls getting education there also came to join Kanya Ashram, Wardha. In the beginning, Vinoba used to come there in daytime to take their classes, but later he came in the evening and returned to Nalwadi after the morning prayers. However, by 1938 his health had gone down so much as to cause worry. This was because of excessive strain of six months' spinning for eight hours per day, mal-nutrition caused by living on meagre wages earned thereby and the wayside situation of Nalwadi on way to Nagpur which led to heavy dust pollution due to very busy traffic. It became essential for him to take rest at some place. Gandhi even proposed Sevagram Ashram, where he could look after him. But Vinoba rejected it humourously: "I can't rely on you. You have many things to do, including serving the sick of whom there are many. I shall be one of them. What good will it do?" Ultimately, the choice fell on Paunar where Jamnalal Bajaj had a vacant bungalow. Gandhi, however, laid a condition that Vinoba would free himself of all work and stop thinking about them. This was agreed to by Vinoba, and while crossing the river Dham to reach the

bungalow on the other side, he said thrice, "I have given up, I have given up, I have given up." A man of extraordinarily strong will, Vinoba always did what he once resolved. With mind completely relaxed, better diet and the digging exercise gradually increased up to two hours per day, Vinoba had recouped his health considerably and gained weight from 88 to 128 lbs. Vinoba named the place 'Paramdham', since it was situated on the other side of the Dham river. It became his permanent abode and an Ashram grew up there. It was to Vinoba what Sevagram was to Gandhi.

As he recouped his health, his activities grew. He increased his contact with the village Paunar and started a workshop there for the villagers. Weaving too was subsequently started and some children began learning it. If Vinoba had to purchase anything, he would do so at a price just to the producer taking into consideration the price of the raw material and the hours of work spent on it. He did not believe in exploitation as others did, and he taught the children to develop feeling against exploitation of the poor and the weak.

As regards the development of his thought and his literary achievements, *Gitai* occupies historically the first place. It was a delayed fulfilment of his mother's wish who did not know Sanskrit and who could not also follow the *Gita* in its available Marathi translation. Hence she had asked her Vinya to translate it for her in simple verse, and this was what her Vinya later did. As the name itself suggests, it denoted both his love for the *Gita* and his mother. It was a discharge of a debt he owed to her. He started working on it on 7 October 1930 and finished it on 6 February 1931. While working on it, he would read out to his pupils and elicit their suggestions for improvement. However, final touches were given to it in Dhulia Jail and it was published during that period itself. Gandhi had said in his Foreword to it: "The beauty of *Gitai* is that the meanings and the music of the *Gita* have been rendered in Marathi in such a way that those who do not

know the original can enjoy reading it as they would the original.”

After *Gitai* came the *Talks on the Gita*, delivered in Dhulia Jail on Sundays, beginning with 21 February 1932 and ending on 19 June that year. These lectures had been taken down by Sane Guruji and thus preserved for posterity. The *Talks* are indispensable for an understanding of Vinoba's philosophy of life. As he himself said: “The bond between the *Gita* and me transcends reason. My heart and mind have received more nourishment from the *Gita* than my body has from my mother's milk . . . . I live and move in the atmosphere of the *Gita*.” The *Gita*'s ideal is that of the steadfast wisdom and it insists on the discharge of one's *swadharma*, duties, without attachment to results. Vinoba had his own interpretation of these concepts and an examination of his life reveals their influence on him. It is not possible here to summarize his ideas expressed in the *Talks*. It should suffice to cite the opinion of an eminent scholar like Dr T.M.P. Mahadevan, who writes: “As a life-long student of Adi Shankaracharya, it was for me a unique experience to read Vinoba Bhave's *Talks on the Gita*. It is obvious that the *Talks* were profoundly influenced by Shankara's *Gita Commentary* and they are also the results of Vinobaji's rich and wide experience. It may be remembered that in a well-known passage Shankara observes that the authorities for *Vedanta* are not only *Shruti*s etc., but also experience. He says that the end of Vedantic enquiry is experience.” Dr Mahadevan also points out the influence of the Maratha saints on it.

Vinoba had profusely written and spoken on the *Gita*. He found it reflecting on all aspects of life, without any undue emphasis on any one, and synthesizing by eliminating contradictions in various experiences. He particularly noted three kinds of synthesis in it—synthesis between various metaphysical systems, between the conflicting claims of individual and society and between the claims of the physical body and the soul. He holds the *Gita* to be above sectarianism



and its teachings not coming in conflict with those of other religions.

During this period, Vinoba also learnt Arabic to read the *Koran* in original to have a first hand knowledge of it. It was in line with his on-going attempt to understand other religions without prejudices. In this context, one is reminded of a peculiar experience he had in the fortieth year of his life. Vinoba, who hardly ever remembered his birth-date, began to analyse his past life in May 1935 and he found that while his first twenty years had been spent in acquiring knowledge, the next twenty were devoted to the observance of ethical disciplines. He felt then that the rest of his life should concentrate on giving and acquiring love of others. His study of the *Koran* in original can also be viewed as a step in that direction.

Vinoba, however, took about a decade to rise completely over the habits he had come to acquire during the second twenty years of his life. The strict *sadhana* of this period had made him dry and unsocial, at least outwardly, and it persisted with him till the thirties. Gandhi had also mildly drawn his attention to it. Later in 1949 Vinoba explained his nature of this period by telling that when a fruit is raw, it does not taste good but on becoming ripe it acquires sweetness. Such a metamorphosis can be testified in Vinoba's life as well by those who have known both the earlier and later Vinoba.

At the end, it may also be mentioned that, even though rarely, there were a few occasions when Gandhi had to correct Vinoba. One such occasion was Vinoba's opposition to the spinning of fine yarn. Gandhi did not agree with him and told him: "Our forefathers forced the poor to produce Dacca muslin to gratify the delicate taste of the people who loved luxury. Let us atone for their sin by spinning as *Yajna* yarn of the finest count and offer it to the Lord . . . . It is necessary to revive the old skill in order to popularise khadi among all classes of people. We should prove that what was possible then in the days of slavery can be done in the age of freedom too."

## *The War Years*

THE VERY DAY the United Kingdom declared war against Germany in September 1939, the Viceroy did the same on behalf of India without consulting Indians, though the Congress had repeatedly made it clear that it would refuse to be dragged into any war without its consent. However, since its sympathies lay with Great Britain and France against Nazi Germany, efforts were first made by the Congress to arrive at a settlement with the government. But they failed and the Congress, as advised by Gandhi, decided to launch an individual Civil Disobedience Movement on the limited issue of the freedom of speech to express and propagate its views on war into which the country had been dragged and in whose conduct it had no say.

This individual Satyagraha was launched on October 17 1940 with Vinoba as the first satyagrahi, Jawaharlal Nehru getting the second nomination. Gandhi had chosen Vinoba as the first satyagrahi, because he had thought that it would be the last satyagraha conducted by him and he wanted it to be as flawless as possible. Vinoba seemed to be the best choice for it, though he was practically unknown to the country as a whole and Gandhiji had to write an introductory article on him in his *Harijan*. How Gandhiji sought and got the consent of Vinoba to his participation is interesting. He called Vinoba from Pauniar and disclosing his

mind to him, said that if he could make himself available for it without special efforts, he should get ready for it. Vinoba then said half jocularly: "I consider your call to be like a call from Yamaraj (the God of Death), therefore, I need not even go back. I can go for satyagraha direct from here."

Vinoba was sentenced thrice in this satyagraha, the sentence initially being of three months but getting doubled up every time. Thus he was sentenced in all to twenty-one months. However, he was released before time in December 1941 with others when, with the entry of Japan in the war on the side of the Axis powers, it took a turn for the worse against the Allies.

Before starting his first satyagraha, Vinoba had issued a statement clarifying his stand. It said: "Twenty-four years ago I left my house with the sole aim of seeing God. My life till this day has been a life dedicated to the service of the people, believing strongly that their service is the easiest and the best method of seeing God. I hold and it has been my experience that the service rendered by me to the poor, has been my own service not theirs." He also added: "I fully believe in nonviolence and I think that it alone can solve all problems of humankind. Constructive activities like Khadi, Harijan service, communal unity, etc are only external expressions of nonviolence. . . . War does not become of human beings. It does not differentiate between combatants and non-combatants. The mechanical war of today is an acme of inhumanity. It relegates man to the level of a beast. India worships Swarajya, the rule of all. It can only be achieved by nonviolence. There is not much difference between Fascism, Nazism and Imperialism. But it ill agrees with nonviolence to create problems for a government in dire danger. Hence this Individual Satyagraha of Gandhiji. If the government does not arrest me, I shall gently urge the people not to help in the war in anyway. I shall explain to them the philosophy of nonviolence, of the horridness of the present war, and of

Nazism, Fascism and Imperialism being the various sides of the same coin.”

In his speeches, Vinoba told the people that neither the war could be abolished nor peace established by negative programmes. War is the outcome of a diseased mentality and it demands positive programmes. The whole of humankind must bear the responsibility for it, not merely Europeans. His own opposition to the war rested both on moral grounds and on its being an imperialism in design.

During his period of imprisonment, Vinoba had discussions with his inmates there on the principles of a nonviolent political order and his ideas on it were later published as *Swarajya Shastra* in Marathi. It has been translated in several languages including English and published in it under the same name. This booklet is all the more remarkable in that Vinoba had been speaking and writing mostly on spiritual matters, but here he also emerged as a political thinker of a high order. Writing in 1956, he characterised it as a “Grammar of Lokaniti”. *Lokaniti* stands for the ethics or power of the people in contrast to *Rajaniti*, the politics of the State. In its *Preface*, he clarified, “rajya (government) is one thing. Swarajya (self-government) is another. Government can be had through violence, but self-government is impossible without nonviolence. So the thoughtful do not want government, but urge the people to strive for self-government.” He also explained that the negative aspect of self-government was “not to desire to govern” and its positive aspect was “to strive for self-government”.

Vinoba was aware that all thinking takes place within the context of particular time and place, and, as such, it has both general and particular elements, both enduring and transitory features. Hence he clearly said: “The science of self-government is ever growing. Its systems are ever changing according to time and place. But its basic principles are eternal. It is on the basis of these eternal principles that

the outline here presented has been made." Vinoba stood for a government which seems to each, his own rule, or in other words, which is a rule of all.

After his release in December, 1941, Vinoba did not remain long outside the prison walls. After some nine months he was detained again when in August 1942 the Congress adopted its Quit India Resolution. He was then first kept in Nagpur Jail, then transferred to Vellore Jail and finally to Seoni Jail, from where he was released in July 1945, along with other detainees.

But before dealing with his jail period, an incident must be given. This time Gandhi was of the view that if imprisoned, he would go on an indefinite fast and he expected the same of others. This idea of his was opposed by others who were close to him. They argued that the idea of mass fasting was visionary. They were also worried about Gandhi himself. Gandhi consulted Vinoba who concurred with him saying, "What Ram can do out of understanding, Hanuman can do out of faith." This settled the matter then, but Gandhi as an afterthought gave up the idea for the time being reserving it for further consideration. Since he had not informed Vinoba of it, on his arrest in the early morning of 9th August, he took care that Vinoba be intimated of his change of mind. Vinoba, unaware of it, had informed the jailor of his intention to fast from the evening, but before it could actually materialize, he had been conveyed Gandhiji's message through a reliable source with the permission of the government. However, in February 1943 when Gandhi went on a 21 day fast, Vinoba did the same on getting its information a day later. This shows that for Vinoba approval of anything implied following it in his own life.

It was in Nagpur Jail this time that Vinoba started giving another series of talks on the *Gita* which were completed in the Vellore Jail, and are known as *Gita Vallari*. These talks were of an advance nature compared to the famous Dhulia

talks. The reason for it lay in the fact that the Nagpur and Vellor audiences were much more educated than that of Dhulia, which was mostly composed of ordinary prisoners. But, unfortunately, there was no Sane Guruji this time to take them down verbatim. Hence the final version prepared from the notes of several persons failed to meet Vinoba's touchstone and he did not want them to be published. However, several typed copies of that version exist, and a few portions of it have been published even in the *Maitri*, the monthly of the Brahma Vidya Mandir. The author of this biography had the opportunity of going through a typed copy and, as usual, he found them highly remarkable for their originality of ideas and treatment, particularly for his concepts of *swadharma* (one's own duty) and *stithprajna* (the man of steadfast wisdom).

In Seoni, Vinoba spoke on the last eighteen versus of the second chapter of the Gita, and these talks of a still more advanced nature, were found very useful by persons given to spiritual efforts. Originally given and published in Marathi as *Stithprajna Darshan*, they are available in some other languages as well including English under the title *Steadfast Wisdom*. With these talks, delivered at the age of about 48, Vinoba may be said to have completed his stage of *sadhana*, both spiritually and intellectually.

The various jail terms, beginning with the twenties, had made no difference for Vinoba. He had rather found them more suited for Ashram life based on various ethical disciplines. With its regular life, physical labour, few possessions, insipid food, etc. along with enough time for thought and contemplation, he returned from prisons with some new ideas every time. A remarkable incident may, however, be related here. It was probably in Akola Jail during his first incarceration that he was put in solitary confinement by the jailor. But Vinoba knew how to pass his time and keep himself happy in his cell. When the jailor discovered that he

even enjoyed his solitary confinement, he was brought back to the general ward.

During his last incarceration, Vinoba had to live with persons of all shades of political opinions, and he found that goodness like evil was not the monopoly of any particular group. Therefore he felt that it would not suit him to belong to any particular organization and his efforts should rather aim at co-ordinating the goodness in all. On his release when questioned by Gandhiji about the new idea he had brought from his jail that time, he told him of it, and Gandhi approved it, interpreting it to mean that while he would belong to all organizations, he would accept no office in them.

Vinoba's confinement in Vellore Jail had also provided him with an opportunity to learn all the four languages of the south, namely, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam. He returned this time from imprisonment with the idea of taking up the service of the weakest section of society, and he did so by undertaking scavenging and sanitation work in village Sargaon, some five kilometres away from Paunar and connected with it only by a foot-path passing through fields. The path was sometimes flooded with water in the rainy season, but, undaunted by all this, Vinoba used to visit the village regularly, with the ideal of the sun before him. This activity beginning on 2 April 1946, had continued even for some time after the passing away of Gandhiji when Vinoba moved out of Paunar and assumed new responsibilities.

## *Gandhi's Martyrdom: New Responsibilities*

BESIDES HIS SURGAON activity, Vinoba helped in the running of the *Harijan* by contributing articles in it in 1946 and 1947. In October 1947 his father died as mentioned in the first chapter, leaving behind 25 thousand rupees in bank accounts, 450 acres of family land in Gagoda and a library. The money was handed over to Gram Seva Mandal, while the family land was distributed when Gagoda became a Gramdan village. The 15th of August, 1947 was no special day for Vinoba. He went to Surgaon in the morning as usual, but he did address a public meeting in the evening. He observed then that just as Independence had led to the unfurling of a new flag, it should also lead to a new system of education replacing the old one.

Gandhiji's death on 30th of January 1948 did not produce any immediate reaction on Vinoba but after a few days he started feeling the gravity of it. However, all through the mourning period, he spoke every evening. In his first address on the 31st, he drew a parallel between Lord Krishna's death and that of Gandhiji. He said that though superficially the two appeared to differ since in one case the action seemed to be unintentional and in the other intentional, it was not so in reality since Godse who shot Gandhi mistook him to be an enemy of Hinduism, when it was he who was keeping the



name of Hinduism blazoning in the world. Yet, there was no cause for grief, Gandhiji was not afraid of death and he died in a prayerful mood.

To Vinoba, Gandhi was not a person but an idea, and as such his emphasis in these speeches was on ethical disciplines, Khadi with self-reliance in cloth requirements, indispensability of nonviolence if science itself was to survive, the need of nonviolence both in individual and collective life, etc. He disfavoured physical memorials to Gandhi and his reaction to the suggestion of a Gandhi temple was that Gandhi was a human being and should be allowed to remain as such. If he was raised to godlihood, the quintessence of his message would be lost on the people. Respect for all religions would be the best memorial to the Mahatma.

Gandhiji himself had mooted the idea of a conference of constructive workers at Sevagram in February and he was to leave for Wardha on 31 January when he was snatched away a day earlier. The conference was held later in March and was even attended by Dr Rajendra Prasad, Pt. Nehru and Maulana Azad as special invitees. Dr Rajendra Prasad even presided over it. All eyes at the conference were riveted on Vinoba as the spiritual heir of Gandhi, and on his advice it was decided to form Sarvodaya Samaj, a loose organization of those who believed in the ideas and ideals of Gandhi. Another important outcome of the conference was of Vinoba agreeing to take up the peace and rehabilitation work in and around Delhi at the request of Pandit Nehru. He reached there with some other workers on the 30th of that very month and devoted himself to that work for about six months.

Clarifying the purpose of his mission on the very day he reached Delhi, he said: "Though it is necessary to mitigate the sufferings of the refugees, it is not my main task. My basic mission is to replace the prevailing atmosphere of hatred and bitterness with one of peace, harmony and goodwill.

Violence cannot be countered by violence; love alone can generate conducive atmosphere. This cannot be done by the government. It is the duty of the people and voluntary organizations to help the government in this crucial task.”

Vinoba visited the refugee camps in Delhi and Punjab, and asked the refugees to banish from their minds the idea of Hindu Raj. He advised them against being influenced by what Pakistan did and emphasized that they were first human beings and then Hindus, Sikhs or Muslims. He said to the Meos of Gurgaon district: “God has bestowed upon us two great capacities—one of remembrance and the other of forgetfulness. We must discriminate between what should be remembered and what should be forgotten. True discrimination lies in forgetting the evil and remembering the good done by others.” He reminded the people of the long tradition of India to welcome even the adherents of other creeds and asked them to maintain it.

Vinoba also went to Ajmer where the Muslims were highly frightened and feared trouble at the time of their famous Urs. He stayed there for a week, visiting Dargah everyday. He received a highly cordial treatment there in the Muslim manner and was even permitted to hold his own prayer in it. Vinoba told the Durgah devotees: “India belongs to all communities, irrespective of their religions. We are born of the dust of this land and would return to it. We should, therefore, love one another, have room in our hearts for one another and live like brothers.” However, he did not fail to notice the absence of their womenfolk in their collective prayer, and asked them to give up their old custom and permit them also to participate in it along with men.

In October, Vinoba visited Bikaner where some caste Hindus accustomed to worship at a temple everyday had been debarred from entering it because they had done sanitation work in Harijan localities. In protest against it, they were on fast. Vinoba prevailed upon them to give it up

and instead resolve not to enter the temple till Harijans too were allowed to do so. He said to them: "A temple not open to all, lodges only a stone idol and God does not reside there." He also went to Jaipur in December on the occasion of the Congress session, to open the Sarvodaya Exhibition. There he pointed out that the so-called small tools led to large-scale production by allowing participation in work not only to one or two millions but to tens of millions and they were superior in that they provided means of livelihood to them all.

In the last week of the year, he was at Wardha because of the Sevagram session of the World Pacifists Meeting. In his opening speech, read out by some other since he was unwell, he had said: "Ahimsa is not merely non-participation in the destructive activities; it principally manifests itself in constructive activities—services which lead to the upward growth of men." He also pointed out that the light of Ahimsa could not be spread by organisations. It was not the physical body which could do it, since it was itself an embodiment of violence. Ahimsa was assimilated to the extent one rose over one's body. It was a natural state of the soul and, therefore, what it needed was the quest of the spirit, purification of mind and heart, service of living creatures, universal love and fearlessness. He also then made the startling but valid and highly original remark that he was not afraid of world wars but of the small ones. He said: "When we do not understand what is right straightaway, the all-merciful God sends world war to free man's mind from limitations and make him think in terms of humanity as a whole. This is a big step towards Ahimsa. But it is not true of small wars. They are the sworn enemies of Ahimsa and all the times push Ahimsa further and further away."

Vinoba returned to Delhi for the first anniversary of Gandhi's death, and then decided to go round the country. His visits to various parts of the country—U.P., Rajasthan, Bombay, Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and

Andhra—served the useful purpose of making him familiar with the people of these parts, and at the same time acquainting them with himself and his ideas. All this was essential if he was to initiate an all-India Movement, as he probably intended to do, for the reconstruction of a nonviolent society in the country. From Andhra, he returned to Wardha and intended to go to Bihar, but could not do so because of intense stomach pain due to duodenal ulcer. The visit was cancelled.

But it was not in his nature to sit still, and he began his experiment of *Khanchan-mukti*, freedom from gold or money economy, from the New Year Day of 1950. Before, taking it up, it would be appropriate to deal with his experiences of peace and rehabilitation work in which he had been engaged at the instance of Pandit Nehru. According to Vinoba, he worked very hard those days and something was achieved but not the thing he was after. Hence he came out of it after six months, the period he had assigned for this purpose. The work he had to do was of liaison type, and what he found was that while Panditji said one thing, the persons who had to carry out his order had their own ideas and they acted in their own manner. It also happened that once the Punjab Government which had promised to give land to Harijans, later went back on its assurance on the plea of the lack of enough substitute lands even for those who had left them behind in Pakistan. This was a *status quo* mentality which Vinoba could not appreciate. Vinoba had also hoped that the work of rehabilitating Meos might result in the development of the power of nonviolence and to the discovery of a method helpful in initiating a nonviolent revolution in the country besides strengthening the Khadi Movement, but it too did not happen. Hence, despite some achievements, he failed to get what he was seeking.

Vinoba's experiment of *Kanchan mukti* which had commenced with the resolve that the Ashram would no more get its requirements beginning with vegetables from outside, has its own history. The idea can be traced back to 1935-36

by which time Vinoba had come to acquire a revulsion for money and had felt the need of the adoption of the principle of non-possession by the Gandhian institutions to usher in a nonviolent society. At the Rau Sarvodaya Sammelan in March 1949, he even publicly stated his view that the principles of non-possession was as much applicable to institutions as to individuals, and he questioned the propriety of institutions keeping large funds in banks which they could loan out for any purpose whatsoever, even if un-Gandhian. He had asked why should such funds be maintained at all? And if they were there, why should they not be exhausted in a year or two?

It was with such a background that his experiment of *kanchan mukti* began with the Paunar Ashram. It had a small beginning because Vinoba was a realist and never got impatient. Before the start of the experiment, he explained to the inmates that money economy was the main cause of the unrest and inequality one saw all around in society. The experiment resulted in what is termed 'Rishi' cultivation with the help of small tools and human labour, and it continued for about three years till April 1953, when Vinoba called the Ashram inmates for a concerted drive in Bihar for Bhoodan work. However, the idea did not die, and the threads were picked up again by the Brahma Vidya Mandir, a women institution established in 1959 in the Paunar Ashram, as mentioned earlier.

Vinoba had been of the view that in this experiment lay a partial solution to the problem of unemployment, some hopes for cultivators without means, opportunity for experimentation in intensive farming, a boon for Nai Talim, and, above all, a long-term view for nonviolence.

## *The Bhoodan Period*

WHATEVER VINOBA EVER undertook, he devoted himself with single-mindedness to it. The second Sarvodaya Sammelan, held at Angul in Orissa in 1950, when he was engaged in his *kanchan mukti* experiment, had not been attended by him. The third Sammelan was scheduled for April 1951 at Shivarampalli near Hyderabad and Vinoba was frankly told that if he did not attend it, there would be no sense in holding it. This overcame his reluctance and he agreed to attend it. He, however, decided to reach there on foot in the manner of Buddha, Mahavir and some others, since it could acquaint him better with the people, their problems and their surroundings than any means of rapid transport, bringing greater clarity to his social thinking.

This "Sarvodaya Yatra" as it was termed, began on 8 March and ended at Shivarampalli on 7 April, covering a distance of over 500 kilometers. As usual, Vinoba's daily programme was very regular. He used to halt at some small village for the day, go round it, listen to the people on their problems and address the post-prayer meeting in the evening exhorting them to take to self-help in solving their problems and to love one another. It may be mentioned here that in this Yatra, as also in the later ones, persons accompanying him for months and years together always found some originality and freshness in every speech of his, both regarding ideas and approach.

At the Sammelan, Vinoba told the workers that in the changed circumstances of the country the constructive work needed new directions, and he set forth before them the five-fold programme of inner purity, village cleaning, reverence for physical labour, peace corps and *sutanjali*, i.e. offerings of self-spun yarn, as a token of identity with all those who participate in creative work. On the last day of the Sammelan he made the unexpected announcement of visiting the Telangana region where the people were groaning under the Police Raj in the day and communist reprisals at night. After Independence, the law and order situation in the Hyderabad State had deteriorated due to the activities of the Razakars, a fanatic Muslim militia opposed to any form of democracy in the State or to its acceding to India. The communists, inspired by the Chinese example, had acquired considerable influence over the poor peasantry and they utilised this opportunity to rouse them against the rich landowners, making the latter flee for their safety. Their lands were occupied by the landless. But when the law and order situation improved after the Police Action, they returned and demanded their lands back. This was resisted, leading to a strife between the two. The law and order machinery supported the landowners. Vinoba had decided to go there to study the problem first hand and to bring peace to the area.

He left Shivarampalli on 15 April morning, reaching Hyderabad the same day. He met the communists jailed there, had a two-hour talk with them and returned with the feeling that he had been able to impress upon them of his goodwill. This is not surprising. Vinoba's *Introduction to K.G. Mashruwala's Gandhi and Marx*, published that very year in September, had expressed his high regard for Marx as a thinker with genuine sympathy for the poor and the exploited, though he had also found fault with his thinking and completely differed with him on the method. Vinoba was of the view that it was the rich who had created the

communists. He also believed in equality in every respect and said: "The police will not be helpful in fighting the communists menace. The only way to root it out is to remove the unjust distribution of land in a peaceful way." However misguided they might be, he did not look upon them as destructionists, and he wanted to bring them on the right track by reasoning and active sympathy for their cause.

In his trek of Telangana, he reached Pochampalli village on the 18th, where the local Harijans told him that if they could get 80 acres of land, they would cultivate it and eke out their living. Vinoba first asked them to give him an application addressed to the State Government, but later realizing that it would take time, he asked the persons present there if someone would donate land for the purpose. One C.R. Reddy then offered to donate 100 acres which his late father wanted to give to deserving persons, and he later confirmed this offer at the evening meeting. This was a happy surprise for Vinoba himself, who took it as a Divine revelation and saw in such voluntary donations the possibility of solving the problem of the landless agricultural labour.

Vinoba himself had left for us an account how he felt all about it, and it is important since it reveals the working of his mind. According to him, "Man does not act on the strength of his individual thinking alone. There is a preparation going on in the surrounding world which prompts action. The donor had no doubt (in this case) become the immediate and effective cause, but, may be, the atmosphere is also ready in the world for such a programme. Nature's planning is never partial. When it gives appetite to the child, it not only provides the mother with the necessary food but also inspires her to feed the child. And (then) suddenly came the flash and I realized that the world power beckons me to fulfil some new mission." Then he asked himself if he had the capacity for it, and the reply was: "if I am blind to the suggestion, I must either give up faith in nonviolence and accept violence as my creed or I should become a pessimist." But not being



prepared for either, he fell fast asleep with "heart within and God overhead".

His faith was further enhanced when from that day onwards he repeated that appeal at every meeting with favourable response. Thus was born the Bhoodan idea and in his 51 days in Telangana, he had collected 12,001 acres. The task of distributing it was assigned to a committee before he left that State. However, one could not be sure if such donations would also be forthcoming in areas devoid of communist troubles, and this had to be experimented upon.

Vinoba soon got an opportunity for it as well. R.K. Patil, a member of the Planning Commission, had a discussion with him at Paunar on the draft of the First Five Year Plan. Vinoba was highly critical of it on several grounds. There was no commitment in it for work and food to all citizens despite assurances for them in the Constitution; it did not provide for self-sufficiency in foodgrains and envisaged their import for an indefinite period though the Government pledged to attain self-sufficiency by 1951; it asked the village industries to stand on its legs after their feet had been chopped off; and it failed to provide for cow protection when the Indian conditions demanded it. Vinoba was still more emphatic on the introduction of basic education, since he held that Nai Talim would not only make for self-sufficiency in food and cloth but would also generate a spirit of self-sacrifice and self-respect in the new generation. Laying stress on the dire need of Khadi and village industries, he even said: "If you can provide full employment to the people through other programmes, including that of large-scale industries, I shall burn my Charkha and cook a day's meal, without shedding a single tear."

Patil apprised Nehru of Vinoba's views who invited Vinoba to visit Delhi for discussions with him and his other colleagues of the Planning Commission. Vinoba accepted it and decided to proceed to Delhi on foot, demanding lands on

the way for the landless. Leaving Wardha on September 12, he reached New Delhi exactly after two months via Sagar, Jhansi, Agra and Mathura. The land donations during this *padayatra* averaged 300 acres a day, demonstrating that the idea was also workable in such areas which lacked communist turbulence. This brought a new confidence to Vinoba and roused a new spirit in the country. Consequently, when he was at Sagar on Gandhi's birthday, he demanded of the country 50 million acres of land, i.e. one-sixth of the total cultivable area in the country, by 1957, the centenary year of the First War of Indian Independence.

He was welcomed at Mathura by the workers of Uttar Pradesh, and they resolved to present him with five lakh acres of land within a year. After visiting Delhi and having discussions with Nehru and the Planning Commission, he toured U.P. and the movement there became a people's movement, reminding the public of the days of Gandhi. By April 1952 when the 4th Sarvodaya Sammelan was held at Sevapuri, near Varanasi, more than a lakh acre had been collected in the state and, encouraged by it, the Sammelan had resolved to collect 25 lakh acres in the whole country within two years. After the Sammelan, Vinoba continued his tour of U.P., and finally returned to Varanasi to spend the rainy season there, before proceeding to Bihar. Two important events of the post-Sevapuri period deserve mention. Vinoba had started at Kanpur asking for *sadhan-dan*, i.e., donations of the means of cultivation like wells, bullocks and other inputs from the rich for the poor donees of Bhoodan lands. Secondly, he got his first Gramdan of the village Mangroth in the district of Hamirpur, to which we would return in the next chapter.

Vinoba left U.P. for Bihar on September 14, and by that time the all India collection was little less than four lakhs, U.P.'s contribution being 2,95,028 acres. So far the movement had passed through three phases. The first was *Palliative* phase, aiming at the removal of the local grievance

which characterised the Telangana period. The second phase was of *Calling Attention*, which aimed at creating a wide understanding of the movement and drawing the attention of the country towards it. This was a feature of the foot journey from Wardha to Delhi. The third phase, witnessed in U.P., was of *Fortification of Faith*. It created a confidence in the workers that they could collect land. With Bihar, the movement entered the fourth phase of *Extensive Land-gift*, in which efforts were directed towards getting one-sixth of cultivable land. On entering it, Vinoba had laid down a target of 50 lakh acres for it to see how far success could be attained in collecting that much portion of the land. It was later reduced to 32 lakh acres and he stayed there till the very end of 1954, i.e., for more than 27 months, going round all the districts twice or thrice for this purpose. The total collection in Bihar during this period had come to over 22 lakh acres.

Four events of the Bihar period stand out prominently in the life of Vinoba. They are the two Sarvodaya Sammelans of Chandil and Bodhgaya, his severe illness before the Chandil Sammelan and the event at Baidyanathdham. The Sarvodaya Sammelans will be dealt with later since they pertain more to the development of his thought, but the other two need telling here. Vinoba was down with malignant malaria at Chandil in Manbhum district in December 1952, but he refused to take any medicine as was his wont, and his condition became critical causing anxiety to all, especially to Pandit Nehru, Dr. Rajendra Prasad who belonged to Bihar, and to the then Bihar Chief Minister Shrikrishna Sinha. The last person implored Vinoba with tears in his eyes to agree to take medicine, and ultimately Vinoba too felt that nonviolence demanded that their feelings should not be injured and he agreed to take the medicine, which worked miraculously on his unmedicated system. He recovered but was so weak that he had to remain there for months to recoup himself and the fifth Sarvodaya Sammelan had to be held there.

The Baidyanathdham incident took place in September, 1953 when Vinoba was there and the head priest of the famous temple invited him to visit it. On being informed that Vinoba did not visit any temple not open to Harijans, the head priest also gave his consent for it. However, when Vinoba went there with others, the Pandas fell on him and his party, and though his companions did their best to protect Vinoba, he was injured at the ear. Vinoba issued a statement next day which said that the hooliganism was due to ignorance and that he did not want them to be punished. He, however, added, "This is an age of science. Every faith is put to the touchstone of reason." It appears that the head priest had given consent to the entry of the Harijans out of the fear of the law against untouchability.

From Bihar Vinoba entered West Bengal on his way to Orissa, spending 25 days in the districts of Bankura and Midnapore. This short and rather casual stay did not bring him much land, but it was highly significant for another reason. The soil of Bengal had produced Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, Shri Ramakrishna Parmahansa and many other religious leaders, social reformers and literary giants who had fathered the Indian Renaissance in the last century, and at one time, as already told, Vinoba himself had been attracted by its revolutionary movement. Had Gandhi not entered into his life, he might have visited it much earlier. However, on this occasion he called upon Bengal to supplement its legendary devotion with nonviolent activity. He was also able to contact its leading men of letters, teachers, public workers and politicians, and was able to win the support of many.

It was also there that Vinoba received an invitation to attend the Avadi (Madras) session of the Indian National Congress in January 1955. He could not accept it because it involved digression from his mission, but being anxious to get the Congress co-operation in his mission, his reply to that invitation said: "Please convey to the delegates, on my behalf,

the word that there is an individual who is constantly moving about with the hope, that sometime or other, Congressmen will run to his succour and that he regards himself entitled to receive their help." This was in line with Vinoba's attitude to seek the co-operation of all, including political parties in his work of unquestioned importance. Pandit Nehru was so much moved by this reply that he got it read out to the delegates, and the Congress passed a resolution appreciating the work being done by Vinoba and appealed to Congressmen to extend their fullest co-operation to the Bhoodan Movement.

Vinoba entered Orissa on the Republic Day in 1955, and with this the Bhoodan period be rather taken as having come to a close. The movement underwent such qualitative transformation in Orissa that the word Bhoodan in the restrictive sense used so far would not suit it, though this transformation was inherent in the basic idea of Bhoodan that all land belonged to God, and it could well have been expected to flower in propitious circumstances. Vinoba considered it as the fifth and the final phase of Bhoodan and named it as the *Land Revolution*, properly termed Gramdan, in which 80 per cent or more of villagers surrendered their ownership over land in the village to the village community for equitable distribution among them and the land so tendered did not come to less than 50 per cent of the total land in the village. This redivision of land amongst them could be revised after every ten-year period in accordance with their altered family needs. However, the original practice of getting part of one's land as Bhoodan in the non-Gramdan areas continued for years and was never formally given up. But with time the increasing emphasis was on getting Gramdans, either as originally conceived or in its easier form to be described later.

This depicts the history of important events of the period of this chapter. Without minimising their importance, it must, however, be said that of far greater importance were the ideas Vinoba was expounding during this period as his philosophy

of individual and social life. Bhoodan was only an expression of this philosophy and to that now I recur.

During his Telangana tour, Vinoba had met three kinds of people—the communists, the village rich and the common villagers. He had told the first that their dream had not been realized anywhere so far and that none could say if it would be realized at all. Hence it would be a mistake of the first order if they did not give up their method of violence on even pragmatic grounds

He had told the second group who had fled away from their villages to take the vow of serving their fellow villagers and to return to stay among them courageously. It was better to die there than to live in cities out of fear. One could get rid of the fear by loving and serving the poor. His advice to the common people was that they should have love for their well-off fellow villagers and protect them. He explained at all places that land donations should not be considered as acts of charity but given with the feeling that all had claims on land just as they had over water, air and sunlight.

On his way to Delhi from Wardha, he developed his Bhoodan ideas further in consonance with his basic philosophy of individual and social life which had fully evolved by the fifties. He had made it quite clear even in 1951 that his mission was not to stave off a revolution, but to prevent a violent one and substitute it by a nonviolent one. He elaborated on it later on several occasions. For example, he observed in 1954: "We seek to reconstruct society on a new basis. That is the purpose behind the Bhoodan work. It is not merely to collect land. What we want to establish are new values—to make morality the guiding principle of social life and to make economics, which enjoys undue importance at present, subservient to the former. The Bhoodan Movement is for us an instrument for achieving a nonviolent and peaceful change of values." Despite this, when some

opponents of Bhoodan looked upon him as an agent of the rich and landlords, Vinoba's reply was: "The truth is that I am an agent of the poor. I am presenting their case. I have lived among them and have tried to make my life like theirs. But I want to be the agent of the big landlords too, provided they give me land generously."

The idea of Bhoodan was a comprehensive idea in that it was not confined to land only. As he said in 1955: "The basic idea of Bhoodan is that wealth, intelligence and every such thing which a man has, belongs to society and they should go to it. If somebody retains something, he is a trustee for it." And his concept of trusteeship, which he made clear on many occasions, implied the ultimate abolition of private property and its conversion into social property, with its benefits available to all. The word "Dan" in "Bhoodan" did not stand for charity but for equitable distribution, a sense in which it was even taken by no less a personage than Adi Shankaracharya. There were occasions when Vinoba refused to accept unbecoming land donations from big landlords, telling them that he was not seeking charity but wanted to initiate them into new values of life. On other occasions he politely said that accepting them would tarnish both the donor's and his reputation.

Several objections were raised against Bhoodan from time to time, and Vinoba had to reply to them. To the charge that he was distributing poverty, he said: "If there is poverty in the country, it should be shared, and if there is wealth, that too must be shared. In fact, it is not a movement of distributing poverty but of joining hearts." His reply to those who argued that small plots of land were uneconomic for cultivation, was: "There is no ground for holding that small plots of land reduce production, especially when you know that our people are inclined towards individual farming." He also made it clear that his movement was based on a positive ideology and was not counteraction against the communists. He said, "The rays of the sun are not a counteraction against darkness."

The wider implications of the movement unravelled themselves as it developed. To the *Sadhan-dan* started in U.P. and mentioned above, he later added *Sampattidan*, gift of wealth, and *Shramdan* the gift of free labour, in Bihar, while there was also some talk of *Buddhidan*, the gift of free intellectual help. Vinoba held that not only the so-called "haves" but the so-called "have-nots" too possess something to contribute for the good of society. They are also "haves" in one respect or another.

Shramdan was expected of all, except those physically invalid, while *sampattidan* was a demand mainly from the well-off either as a part of their wealth or of their income. Vinoba had said in 1952: "From Bhoodan to Sampattidan was a natural step, and its idea had occurred to me along with that of Bhoodan. But the land problem being a basic one, I first concentrated my energy on it. However, as the work of Bhoodan progressed, it became increasingly clear that the idea behind the movement could not be realized unless we went further and asked for a portion of wealth or property."

Vinoba used special occasions of larger gatherings of workers, especially Sarvodaya Sammelans, to explain to them and others, different aspects of his approach and philosophy. The first such occasion was the gathering of the U.P. Sarvodaya workers and sympathisers at Mathura in the very beginning of November, 1951, when he was on his way to Delhi. He said to the workers then: "After the attainment of Swaraj, we must aim at the establishment of *Samyayoga*, the yoga of equality. We have named it Sarvodaya. You may call it by any name." His *Samyayoga* involved the principle that no money appraisal could be made of the intellectual and the spiritual services of any person, and that the basis of payment should for all be the same, whether he is the President of India, a *kisan* or a scavenger. This, however, did not mean any arithmetical equality. It stood for such an equality as was found between the five fingers of a hand, which did not prevent them from co-operating with each other.



The next gathering of importance was Sevapuri Sarvodaya Sammelan, near Varanasi, in April, 1952. It was the first occasion when workers from all over India had gathered in a very large number, enthused as they were over the progress of the movement. On such occasions Vinoba also used to meet the workers of different States collectively to remove their doubts, to resolve their difficulties and to establish rapport with them. He told the common gathering at Sevapuri: "I have been often asked if I expected to solve the entire land problem in this manner. My reply to them is that neither Rama nor Krishna could solve all the problems of the world. World's problems could be solved by the world alone. I can make no egoistic claim that I can solve anybody's problems. That is why no worry disturbs me at night and I go into sleep as soon as I lie down on my bed." He also then explained his ideas on Satyagraha and the reason why he did not think in its term to solve the land problem. He said: "You should know that if I have any reputation in the country, it is only as a Satyagrahi. This means that if I ever find that satyagraha was imperative, nothing will prevent me from offering it. But Gandhiji gave us as a maxim the famous line 'One step is enough for me'. It does not mean that we know nothing about the next step. But as soon as a person gives room in his mind to the next step, he begins to harbour a doubt about the success of the first step. If I have to nurse a sick person, it will not be right for me to simultaneously plan to arrange for his cremation, in case the patient dies. I should serve him with the hope that he would be cured by treatment and nursing. If, however, he dies in spite of my care, I should take the fact peacefully and proceed to make arrangements for his funeral as the next step." He also said: "What you call satyagraha will be real satyagraha only to the extent it retains a persuasive character. As soon as it takes the form of coercion, it ceases to be satyagraha." He advised the workers to concentrate on *Sutanjali* (yarn offering), elimination of money economy, and Bhoodan. It was at Sevapuri also that Vinoba explained his ideas on "freedom from government", which I hope to take up elsewhere.

The next Sammelan was held at Chandil in Bihar in March 1953. In his opening address there, Vinoba explained why he chose to remain outside the Government, free from any administrative responsibility. He said: "When the two bullocks (party in power and the opposition) are already yoked to the cart, how will the addition of a third one help it? It instead can repair the road for the cart to go on it right merrily, I can render it the greatest possible service." And then he proceeded to state that the mission of a Sarvodaya worker lies in building up an independent "people's power", and that in itself would be a true service to the government and the people.

He distinguished this "people's power" both from the power of violence and *dandashakti*, i.e., the penal power of the state. However, while people's power was quite opposite to the power of violence, it could not be said so about the power of the state despite the element of coercion involved therein, because of the sanction of society behind it. What he aimed at was the creation of such conditions as would eliminate any need for the exercise of that power and this he did in spite of his view that state power could be an instrument of service and would have to be retained as long as society needed it.

In this context he also clarified his attitude towards the use of legislation to solve the land problem. He said that he was preparing a conducive social climate for it. However, he also added that "there I must stop. If I go a step further and start repeating that our objective cannot be realized except by legislation, then it means that I have strayed away from my duty, the duty imposed on me by the particular path I have chosen to tread."

He also reminded the workers that the method to generate people's power must correspond with the objective itself, and, therefore, it would have to be based on the two principles of *Vichar-shasan*, the discipline of thought, and *kartrittva-vibhajan*, distribution or dispersal of the government's functions

amongst the people. The former implied peaceful conversion of the people to one's views by making them think about it, along with one's own readiness to listen to their views and understand them, avoiding any imposition of one's views upon them. Explaining the latter he said: "There should be no concentration of power at any one place. It should be widely distributed among the villages. Every village ought to have the right to determine what things should be allowed to enter and what should not." His idea thus was to make villages a sort of republics.

He ended his address by cautioning the workers: "We are neither a sect nor a party. The word 'Sarvodai' often used to designate us, is misleading. We are simply human beings like others. Political parties have their different labels which may continue because they are useful to them. But we are not a party."

In another highly significant speech at the Sammelan, Vinoba dealt with his basic approach towards such matters as the Five Year Plan, Community Development Projects, political parties and other ideologies. He said that he had his own specific way of dealing with such matters and it was of laying stress on agreements rather than on disagreements. He knew that some differed with him and wanted disagreements to be emphasized. But he could not agree with them and explained the merits of his approach. Taking the case of the Plan, he pointed out that despite some modifications in the original Plan in the light of his objection, its outlook was different from that of Sarvodaya. Yet, he had avoided to dwell on the points of differences beyond what was necessary for the clarity of thought, though it left an impression that he approved of it on the whole. This impression, he said, was not wrong, but this attitude of approval sprang out of a desire to avoid creating a confusion in the minds of the people. He said: "Today we may, if we decide to oppose the Plan, retard its progress. But that is not the same thing as the capacity for construction. We have not enough hold on the people to

place our own programme before them and get it implemented. I therefore, think it improper from the point of view of nonviolence, to use my influence in creating *buddhibheda*, confusion of thought, and preventing even the good points from being given effect to."

A second reason for this approach was that any adverse criticism ultimately leads to the questioning of the *bona fides* of the person behind it, conferring on him or her a right to question the good faith of the critics themselves, doing harm to their own cause. As regards co-operation in the Plan, he observed: "We must continue to advance in our own direction. . . . we should co-operate in those aspects of the Plan which we approve of, but we must keep ourselves free. We cannot accept any of these Plans and projects as our own and get entangled in them. We may give the Government our advice if and when sought and may occasionally help it when there is need, but it will be a mistake to make any of its Plans our responsibilities." This was Vinoba's personal attitude, but he left it to individual workers to think for themselves. However, summing up his own position, he said: "When we take to criticising others, we waste a great deal of energy. I, therefore, think that both criticizing others and getting involved in what is not our own work are undesirable and eventually detrimental to our cause."

Regarding political parties, he said: "I am inclined to take the view that they should cease as different parties and combine to form a united front made up of all good and honest people in the country, carrying out commonly agreed programmes. And to that end I try to put before the people a programme of work which may be acceptable to all and in which all can join forgetting their differences. This will tend to draw the parties closer to each other, with the result that their differences will gradually shrink and the points of agreements will increase." He hoped that such a programme could take the country forward and develop the inherent strength of the people. He, however, refused then to define "a

good man”, urging the workers to consider it their duty to bridge the gulf between various political parties. On the basis of the *Gita* he said that all the differences observed were on the surface only and that at the bottom there was unity which one should try to see. This could only create an atmosphere for it. Differences in views would always be there but one must aim at unity in the field of action. It may be mentioned here that while in East Pakistan in 1962, Vinoba defined ‘a good man’ as one who is kind-hearted, generous and charitable.

After Chandil came the Bodhgaya Sarvodaya Sammelan in April 1954. It was attended among others by Vice-President Dr. S. Radhakrishnan and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. It was on this occasion that Jayaprakash Narayan dedicated his life to Gandhian work and appealed to others to do the same. Consequently, Vinoba too formally dedicated his “humble life for the attainment of a nonviolent revolution based on Bhoodan Yajna and sustained by village industries”. It was also on this occasion that Vinoba established an Ashram at Bodhgaya on a piece of land donated for it in the vicinity of the sacred Mahabodhi tree for the purpose of research on synthesis between the philosophy of the Upanishads and the ideology of Buddha and for the service of the devotees of both and the poor people of the area. It was named as Samanvaya Ashram, which is now a fairly big centre.

Before closing this chapter another fact of this period too must be mentioned, and it relates to the spread of Vinoba’s fame in the various corners of the world due to the Bhoodan Movement. It was a result of the articles that had begun to appear on him and his movement in various countries, especially the English-speaking ones, along with some radio talks and a few full publications on him. This, as already indicated in introduction, brought many commoners to him to learn more about his personality and some even visited India to meet him and to accompany him for some time on his tour to watch and understand him. A few even became

permanently attached to him and his Paunar Ashram and still visit it now and then though he is no more today.

It is not possible to give here what the various writers said or wrote about him, but, as an illustration, some mention may be made of what Chester Bowles, the US Ambassador to India, wrote about him. He refers to him in at least three books of his, namely, *Ambassador's Report* (1954), *The New Dimension of Peace* (1955) and *Ideas, People and Peace* (1958). Bowles was highly appreciative of Vinoba's movement and in the first book he also deals with some of his ideas. But what rather attracts one most in it are his preliminary remarks: "India is a land of miracles, and strange are the shapes in which miracles come . . . when Gandhi came, despite all his denials that he was a Mahatma, the people believed that the Lord had come again to work in the world. And now just as frustration and despair were spreading among the people, a frail old disciple of Gandhi is applying the Mahatma's principles of non-violence and truth to the solution of the problem of land."

In the second book he wrote: "In 1955 we sensed that the Bhoodan movement was giving expression to a moral revival throughout India. In a country as vast and full of contrasts as India, one must avoid hasty generalisations based on isolated personal experiences, no matter how vivid. Having said that, I must still state that from our own knowledge and life in India, we were greatly heartened. The glowing promise of a deeper and spiritually richer life, which had dimmed somewhat in the years after the first major accomplishment of Independence, seemed to be reawakening, and Indians were thinking more and more of moral values." That was how he felt then, and so did many others. If it did not take firm roots as it seems today and though Vinoba would have called it a superficial view, the fault did not lie in his efforts but in other factors. This is, however, no place to go into them, and we shall take it up in the last chapter.

## *Gramdan Period: Early Phase*

A VERY NOTEWORTHY event of Vinoba's post-Sevapuri tour in U.P., was the donation of village Mangroth in Hamirpur district in May 1952. With the exception of one or two of 107 families, all donated their entire land. This was the first Gramdan, donation of a village for an equitable distribution of land amongst the families in the village. Its idea, as indicated earlier, was implicit in the very philosophy of Bhoodan that all land belongs to God. However, this donation had been inspired by the example of Shatrughna Singh, the biggest landlord of the village and a hero of freedom struggle in that area. He donated all his land to Vinoba, the saint, and his example was followed by others. This Gramdan was no normal development of the movement but an isolated event. Nonetheless, it set a precedent by giving birth in a concrete form to the idea of Gramdan.

The second Gramdan of Manpur in Orissa took place when the Bhoodan Movement was at its climax in Bihar, and it was soon followed by Akili in that very State. This set the people of that area athinking and the Gramdan idea so much gripped the people of Koraput district that when Vinoba entered Orissa on the Republic Day in 1955, their number was 93 and, when he left the State some eight months after, their number had risen to 812.

There were three special reasons for his phenomenon—the

strong community traditions among the tribals inhabiting that district, the influence of Vishwanath Patnaik who, then 40, had spent his youth in their service and the absence of wide disparity among them in the possession of lands. Like Bhoodan this had again given rise to the view that same would not happen elsewhere, a view which was then belied soon by Tamil Nadu and some other States.

The strenuous work in Bihar and a 25-day yatra in West Bengal had told on Vinoba's health, and his duodenal ulcer started troubling him in the second week of February. When asked about it, he simply laughed and said: "Some diseases become chums to the body and last till its end. So far my stomach was inactive; now it seems to be getting rather active. . . . As I feel being distinct from the body, its pleasures and pains do not affect me." And he continued his programme unmindful of it.

In Orissa, he had started a new practice of stopping on the way for about an hour and devoting it to the study of some book. It was *Bhagwat* there, the most popular classic of Orissa. He used to read the original text, explain its meaning and in case of any difficulty refer it to friends around him. This programme deepened his contact with the people and helped him to understand them better.

On his way to Puri where the Sarvodaya Sammelan was scheduled from 25 to 27 March, he stopped for a few days at Bhubaneswar, where he addressed a meeting of the legislators. Referring to the growing rift between political parties, he said: "If we go on creating differences and bitterness among the people by stressing our party ideologies, I wonder which party will gain thereby. After all, we claim to be the servants of the people. I welcome diversity of views but there must be some programme which can secure the cooperation of all." And his personal opinion was that Bhoodan could be that programme since all agreed that the landless must get lands and the programme was already in hand.



Vinoba reached Puri on 21 March, but he could not visit the famous temple because they did not allow a Christian girl from France accompanying him, to enter it. Hence Vinoba returned from the gate after bowing to the Deity from there. However, he observed at his evening meeting: "These days every religion and nation is going to be put on trial. If we enclose ourselves within our four walls, our progress would be blocked and the expanding liberal mindedness which has been a feature of Hinduism would come to an end. . . . Let us not turn out temples into prison houses." Speaking at the Puri Sammelan, Vinoba explained his idea of satyagraha. He said: "In the domain of violence they proceed from gentle weapons to sharp and sharper ones, but the process in the working of nonviolence is entirely different. If our gentle satyagraha does not yield the desired fruit, we must infer that there is something wanting in our gentleness itself and we must, therefore, render it finer and gentler. That is, in fact, the real nature of satyagraha." And he added: "Keeping this in view, we must appreciate the new conditions, the new forces working in the world as also the post-independence democracy in the country, and realise that we would have to operate more and more gentle varieties of satyagraha."

While he was in Orissa, a meeting of the All India Congress Committee had been so arranged at Berhampur in Ganjam district that he could address it. He then said: "It is neither possible nor necessary to stop the progress of science. It should only be brought under the control of moral power. If that happens, its unbridled progress would not create any fear."

The last district visited by Vinoba was of Koraput. He toured it for about four months, and the late Annasaheb Sahasrabuddhe, a prominent Gandhian worker, was assigned the responsibility of development work there. On his birthday that year, Vinoba enumerated the seven basic objectives of Gramdan. They were the elimination of poverty, awakening love and affection in the landowners and thus improving the social climate in the country, strengthening society by forging

bonds of mutual help and fellow feelings, the revival and furtherance of Indian culture based on the philosophy of *yajna*, sacrifice, *dana* charity, and *tapa*, penance, building a new social order based on voluntary physical labour, co-operation and self-reliance, giving an opportunity to all political parties to come together on a common platform and to work unitedly, and promotion of world peace. The 30th of September was his last day in Orissa, and in his parting message he characterised his tour of the state as “a pilgrimage of strength”.

The next State was Andhra, where he remained from 1 October 1955 to 13 May 1956. Andhra had not so far been touched by the Gramdan breeze, and the workers there were even accepting small land-gifts from big landlords. With Vinoba's arrival, there was a change. The Gramdan idea began spreading and he set the example of refusing unbecoming land-gifts from big landowners. He would tell them that he had not come to beg but to demand the rightful share of the Daridranarayan, the Poor God.

Vinoba entered Telengana on 2 January 1956. There he started having two halts in a day instead of one. This was done to impart a sense of urgency to the efforts. But it also indicated less emphasis on insistence and more on persuasion. As such it was interpreted by some as making his satyagraha gentler. He was at Pochampalli, the birthplace of Bhoodan, on the 30th of January and in a mood of self-introspection at the then outbursts of violence in Bihar and Orissa which had distinguished themselves in his movement, he confessed defeat since Bhoodan stood for peace. He attributed them to the effects of the 1942 happenings there. He also said that in India the two currents of self-knowledge and science are meeting together and it demands of us to rise above our mind which is full of prejudices and predilections.

At Karnool, addressing a meeting of Andhra M.L.A.s, he

regretted that despite Swaraj, the poverty and illiteracy of the poorest sections of society persisted and the Community Development projects had benefited only those who had the means to profit from them. A few days later at Adoni he exhorted the business community to take up the responsibility of making Bhoodan lands cultivable and to help the donees with their managerial ability and other resources. When he left Andhra on 13 May, the Gramdans in the State numbered 20.

Entering Tamil Nadu, he reached Madras a few days later on way to Kancheepuram, where the eighth Sarvodaya Sammelan was to be held from 27 to 29 May 1956. Speaking there, he drew attention to the piling up of armaments, nuclear and non-nuclear, which threatened to destroy the world and said: "We in India, should make a beginning towards our ultimate goal of one world by considering ourselves as Indians first. We must rise over parochial and caste distinctions."

He had a severe attack of malaria in November and had to forgo *yatra* for a few days. During his illness, he considered the working of the movement and at the Sarva Seva Sangh meeting at Palani on 21 November, he advised the workers to stop taking financial aid from the Gandhi Smarak Nidhi and stand on their own legs. He also dissolved all Bhoodan Samities. These steps were respectively termed *Nidhi-Mukti*, liberation from funds, and *Tantra-Mukti*, liberation from organisations. They were very bold steps, but in keeping with his ideas he never regretted them. He had then said: "Today many suffer from an illusion—partly an illusion and partly a truth but more of an illusion—that paid workers are at the back of the Bhoodan movement. We ourselves are responsible for creating this impression, because we think that we cannot do without such workers." He advised them to declare that all salaries would be stopped by the year end. The Sangh, therefore, decided to make the Movement financially people-based on *Sampattidan* and *Sutanjali*.

The dissolution of organizations was a more serious matter, and he advised formation of Sarvodaya Mandals to co-ordinate constructive activities. They were associations of workers both at the State and district levels, with convenors called Nivedaks at the head. The district Nivedaks were nominated by the State Nivedak, who himself was a nominee of Vinoba. The experience of both these changes was a mixed one, with progress in some States and setbacks in others. In Tamil Nadu, within six weeks of the step, the number of Gramdams had risen from 40 to 175.

Vinoba was at Kanya Kumari on 16 April 1957, where he took a pledge saying: "We solemnly pledge this day at the feet of Kanya Kumari on the shore of the Indian Ocean and in the presence of the Sun God that as long as Gram Swaraj is not established in India, we shall continue our Yatra and ceaselessly carry on efforts in that direction. May God give us the strength for achieving this goal." He used the word "we" instead of "I", because he did not look upon himself as an individual, identified with a particular body. That also explains why he alone took the pledge, when others too would have done that gladly. He entered Kerala on 18 April and was welcomed there, amongst others, by its Communist Chief Minister E.M.S. Namboodiripad. On 7 May he was at Kaladi, the birthplace of Shankaracharya, where the Ninth Sarvodaya Sannam was held on 9 and 10 May. At the Sannam, besides other things to be dealt with later, he said: "I am not worried in the least about the number of Gramdams obtained. For me the worker is the test. How many persons of the right type come forward and devote themselves to work is the main thing. Bhoodan needs devotees of high quality to create a new society of the free and equal."

Vinoba was at Kozhikode on 11 July, and there he placed before the people the idea of *Shanti Sena* (Peace Brigade) as "a brigade of workers who would ceaselessly serve the people, influence them morally and would not allow violence to break out." It, however, came into existence on 23 August,

his last day in Kerala, with eight persons taking its pledge in his presence to lay down their lives for maintaining peace through nonviolence and love. On this occasion Vinoba was reminded of Gandhi who had originally mooted the idea of its formation but could not form it because of the weakness of his followers. "But now," he said, "when his soul is free from the bondage of the physical body, the working of his spirit is more effective. This is how the souls of great men work."

Another notable development in Kerala was Vinoba's announcement that he would henceforth accept either Gramdans or the receipts of the donees of Bhoodan lands, and not land-gift papers. This he did for two reasons. First, accepting land-gifts and distributing them was a time-consuming process involving all sorts of difficulties as the experience had shown, and, secondly, it reflected lack of faith in the donors, which ill agreed with nonviolence.

Another worth mentioning event of Kerala relates to the famous Guruvayur temple which had been opened to the Harijans on Gandhi's decision to fast for it. When Vinoba went for *darshan* to the temple, he was accompanied by a few Christians. He asked if they could also go inside but when told politely that they could not, he also did not enter it. To the temple authorities who were keen that he had his *darshan* of the Deity, his reply was: "I am helpless. If I go inside the temple without my Christian friends, I would not be able to see God there." Many Kerala papers commented on the incident and most of them supported Vinoba. It may also be mentioned here that Vinoba's experience of the two famous temples of Karnataka—one at Melkote associated with the memory of Ramanujacharya and the other Gokarna-Mahabaleshwar temple—was different. Vinoba's attitude in such matter was, "If I don't insist on going inside the temple with all my companions, Hinduism will lose its good name in the world."

Vinoba set his foot in Karnataka on 24 August, and his

first message to it said: "From Bhoodan and ending of private ownership in land we have come to Gramdan and Shanti Sena. I would like Karnataka now to demonstrate what a Sarvodaya society is."

The most notable event of Karnataka was the conference at Yelwal, a few miles from Mysore, in September 1957 which was attended by the top leaders of all political hues, including Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Pandit Nehru, Govind Ballabh Pant, Ganga Saran Singh, Z.A. Ahmed, E.M.S. Namboodiripad and S.K. Dey. They appreciated the movement for its voluntary character and nonviolent technique and in their statement appealed to all sections of the people to extend their enthusiastic support to it. The conference statement had been drafted by Pandit Nehru. It set at rest all doubts raised against Vinoba's movement, and it naturally gratified him. It was expected that henceforth all forces in the country would take up the work, but his hope was belied. The reasons for it are unclear, for no competent and informed person has thrown any light on it. What was expected was that in future the Gramdan movement and the Community Development Movement would work in close co-operation, but it did not happen. The reason probably was that the spirit and methodologies of the two were so much at variance that the gulf between them could not be bridged, despite all good intentions of the persons at their helm.

There were two other notable developments in Karnataka. One was the use of "Jai Jagat" (Victory to the World), started by Vinoba as a form of greeting and the second was the addition of the *Sarvodaya-patra* programme. The idea behind *Jai Jagat* has been a feature of Indian culture since ancient times, and it was part of the philosophy and outlook of both Gandhi and Vinoba. However, it was in Karnataka that Vinoba first used it on 1 November 1957, the day the Karnataka State was born. He looked upon it as the beginning of a process of national integration which would finally end in world integration. Speaking about *Jai Jagat* later in Kashmir, Vinoba said that it stood for fearlessness and love for all.

The idea of *Sarvodaya-patra* was expressed on 1 February 1958 at Dharwar. It was a logical offshoot of the Shanti Sena idea. Under this programme, families were to keep earthen pots or any utensils in which the youngest children of the families were to put a handful of grains every morning before eating anything and the grains were to be utilised for Sarvodaya work, especially for the maintenance of Shanti Sainiks, the members of the Shanti Sena. The keeping of a Sarvodaya-patra by a family was presumed to indicate its support for Sarvodaya ideas, a vote for peace including a kind of pledge by the family not to take part in anything that will disturb peace. It also meant a training for children of the family to give precedence to others before self. These later objectives were more important than getting something for the maintenance of the Shanti Sainiks.

Vinoba entered Maharashtra on 23 March 1958, when the region was in the grip of a movement for a unilingual State of its own. The public was keen to enlist Vinoba's support for the cause, but he concentrated on the land problem and avoided involvement in any political controversy. He said on the very first day: "I belong to a different world. I have come to Maharashtra like a child. I have shed off desires. I am empty. I have no opinion to hawk. All that I have is affection for you, an openness of mind to discuss problems in a heart to heart talk with you. I belong to no cult or institution. . . . I am entirely uncommitted. You are welcome to convince me of your point of view or to come to understand what I am saying."

Vinoba reached Pandharpur, the most important place of pilgrimage in Maharashtra, on 28 May. He had never visited it before. The Sarvodaya Sammelan was to be held there from 30 May to 1 June. Here he received written requests from all the three important shrines for visiting them, with all the members of his party, irrespective of caste, creed or sex. Vinoba was overwhelmed by this development, and on the evening of his visit to them said, "It is a great day for me."

Reserving the delineation of his other important ideas expressed at the Sammelan for later pages, one may mention a remark of his in his opening address. He said: "Our needs are many, but the basic need is love. It does not indicate any sense of indulgence. There are two kinds of love, reciprocative and unilateral. In reciprocative love one is actuated to express only when the other person also loves. It is actually a kind of reaction. There is no manifestation of soul power in it. Such love also exists in animals." And he added: "It is unilateral love which is the demand of the age and it is what the saints too have taught." A question troubling the minds of many was put to Vinoba at Pandharpur, asking him the reason for his selecting places of Hindu pilgrimages as the venues of Sarvodaya Sammelans. Vinoba replied that it was wrong to think that he only selected Hindu places. He made no distinction between religions, and, had a conference been held in Palestine, his choice would have Jerusalem. If the next Sammelan was held in Rajasthan, he would suggest Ajmer, a place sacred to all Indian Muslims. The idea behind such selections was to take advantage of the spiritual power of that place.

In his tour of Maharashtra, Vinoba also visited Nevasa, associated with the completion of *Jnaneshwari*. Recalling there the three most important influences on his life, he remarked: "I have had the good fortune to live with Gandhiji and to learn something from him. I am indebted to Shri Shankaracharya for my intellectual grounding. I cannot express in words how much beholden I am to the great saint Jnaneshwar. All I have and I am, is due to him." He dedicated there all his writings to him.

At Chalisgaon where a Sarva Seva Sangh meeting was held, Acharya Kripalani also met him and asked about his alternative if he did not believe in party politics and his method for achieving it. Vinoba said: "I have none. But I want to say after the Sufis that we know the truth, but not the way to attain it. We are in quest of it." Referring to this talk,



he said in his evening speech: "I am in search of power these days. Power is both spiritual and subtle. All revolutions are spiritual at the source. The spiritual values change first and others follow suit slowly later. It is right that they change; it is impossible for them not to do so."

At Dhulia, he visited his old jail and said: "I do not believe in dividing men and women as criminals and non-criminals. Some are branded as such and put into jails, but some are to be found outside, since they are not so in the eyes of the law." During his last day's in Maharashtra, referring to the development of nuclear energy, he observed at Navapur on 19 September: "I submit in all humility that Marx today is out of date and Manu's code has no value. Even Gandhiji's thought as developed and presented by him during his life-time, cannot solve our contemporary problems."

Vinoba entered Gujarat, the land of his *rebirth* on 22 September. To the welcoming crowd, he expressed his debt to Gandhi and said: "I do not know how far I have been able to practise what he preached, but I have no hesitation in saying that I have been constantly trying to translate into action as much of his teaching as I have been able to understand and appreciate." At the Bochasan Ashram in Kaira district, he asked the workers to turn searchlight inwards to find out why the Gandhian institutions have failed to inspire people and are being influenced by politics, when it was otherwise with Gandhi who influenced politics. Vinoba attributed it to their lack of devotion to the eleven ethical disciplines, repeated mechanically everyday in prayer.

Vinoba reached Ahmedabad on 20 December. Addressing a crowd of some three lakhs, he acknowledged his debt to Ahmedabad and Sabarmati and said that it was their responsibility to demonstrate to the world a nonviolent solution of economic disparity and thereby significance of peace and nonviolence. In his farewell message on 12 January 1959 he said that Gandhiji had given us a lot, but

he never wanted that his words or way of thinking should be imitated. He wished that they should be continuously developed and perfected.

Towards the middle of January 1959, he entered Rajasthan, credited with producing both Mira and Rana Pratap. He asked the workers there to develop in themselves the qualities of both and expected them to fulfil his demand of Shanti Sena both in quality and quantity. He visited Ajmer where the Sarvodaya Sammelan was scheduled for 28 and 29 February. There he paid a visit to the Dargah. Speaking there he said: "The message of Islam is very high. It makes no distinction between the poor and the rich. It has strongly prohibited charging of interest and puts forward an ideal of democracy. I declare that I am a Muslim and a Christian as well." Reiterating his idea of visiting Kashmir, first disclosed at Pandharpur, he said at the Sammelan that he was going there without any preconceived ideas. There were many problems connected with Kashmir and his mission was that of love. He would see, hear and study things and then decide how he could be helpful.

The late Martin Luther King Jr., the famous American Negro Leader, met Vinoba at Kishengarh on 3 March along with his wife Coretta King, and had discussions with him on several topics of international importance. Elucidating his views on the potentialities of satyagraha in the present nuclear age, Vinoba said to him: "In this age we cannot afford to have conflict of mental attitudes. Otherwise, nuclear weapons are sure to sort out the whole problem of humanity by doing a clean shave. Hence the need of rising over mind and thinking on the supra-mental level ... . Satyagraha is to let truth take care of itself. Let us not come between truth and ourselves." To another question as to when the Shanti Sena would justify disarmament in India, Vinoba said: "A very difficult question indeed! But I think that unilateral disarmament is quite justified even without Shanti Sena. Any country can disarm, provided it has the courage for it."

Vinoba was in Rajasthan till March end, and on the 13th of that month he was at Kashi-Ka-Vas, the birthplace of Jamnalal Bajaj. It was there that he inaugurated the Brahma Vidya Mandir in his Paunar Ashram for the development of women's power. Entering Punjab on 1 April, he was at Rajpura on 27, where a Nai Talim Conference was held. Here besides repeating his old idea that the pre-Independence system of education had become incongruous with the advent of Independence, he refused the common argument which credited it for producing great men. He said: "This is a baseless argument, just as baseless as it would be to say of a person crossing a river with ten maunds of weight that it was this weight which enabled him to cross it."

At a camp near Bhakra, he observed on 8 May with reference to Pandit Nehru calling such projects as "new temples", that it would be so if one-sixth of the newly irrigated land were to go to the landless. He met the members of Shiromani Akali Dal at Hoshiarpur and advised them to take decision by unanimity and to leave off "their political shoes before entering the sacred precincts of Gurudwaras".

After visiting other places, on route, he set his foot on the soil of Kashmir on 22 May 1959 and remained there till 21 September. On the very first day, he set the tone of his Kashmir visit by repeating what he had said at Ajmer about it. He also said: "Whatever I may speak, I shall do so in order to love. I have no faith in speaking. It is a heartfelt prayer to God that works and accomplishes all." He intensified his penance too by giving up his early morning intake of food, by resuming his old practice of going round the village of his stay to meet people in their homes and to try to be of some use to them, and to carry a part of his personal luggage on his back. His deep knowledge of the *Koran* and respect for the Prophet, established a rapport between him and the common Muslims of that State. At each camp he used to ask one or

two persons to read the *Koran*, would correct their pronunciation and at times explain the meaning of what was read.—

His speeches there laid emphasis on the ethical ideas common to all the religions, relegating to a secondary place the forms of worship, other practices and mythologies. About the political problem of the State, he would point out that it could not be solved by politics. It needed a spiritual approach which demanded unanimity and goodwill. He also said: "Kashmir is directly connected with six countries, viz., India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, China, Russia and the U.S.A. The connection of the USA is through Pakistan. It is, therefore, necessary for the people of Kashmir to raise their thinking to the supra-mental level and evolve a world approach towards their problems."

He crossed Pir Panjal to enter Gulmarg, where he asked the people to turn it into a "Centre of Worship" by eliminating both luxury and poverty. He did not go to Amarnath, since he got its *darshan* everyday when he saw the poor and lowliest in different villages, and talked to them about their problems of hunger and unemployment.

On his way back from Kashmir, Vinoba returned by the national highway. On his last day in that State, i.e., on 20 September 1959, he was at Kathua. He said a few words for the Chinese there. They were: "We have a history of ten thousand years behind us. Innumerable peoples, races and tribes have come here and continue to come. Recently, terror-stricken people came from Tibet and India gave them shelter for they were running for refuge. The Chinese friends did not like it, but I want to say to them that my country's honour is wedded to it. It is this country which produced Buddha, and it regards none as its enemy. Our love for the Chinese would remain the same as it had been in ages past. Had we denied refuge to the Tibetans, we should have fallen from our human stand." Vinoba returned from this visit with

the opinion that the State of Jammu and Kashmir should remain unified and uphold the ideal of secularism in the right sense of the term.

Vinoba was at Pathankot in Punjab on 23 September when he put forward the idea of the establishment of an Ashram there, which came into existence later as "Prasthan Ashram". Thereafter, he spent two weeks in Himachal Pradesh. He felt very happy to be there because of his old desire to go to the Himalayas in the quest of the Supreme. He said while speaking in Chamba district that he was on a quest to discover the power of satyagraha. "Just as the inter-continental ballistic missiles can be fired today from one end of the earth to the other, we have also to discover a similar force of nonviolence which may have its impact on the whole world from one place." After a few days of his re-entry in Punjab, Vinoba decided to proceed on an unprogrammed tour of the State. He thus intensively toured several Punjab districts before reaching U.P. on 8 April 1960, on way to the Chambal region in Madhya Pradesh. Meanwhile, the 12th Sarvodaya Sammelan had been held at Sevagram in March 1960, without Vinoba. This was in consonance to his desire that the workers should not depend on him and carry on their work according to their own lights.

While in Kashmir, Vinoba had received a letter from Tehsildar Singh, the son of the famous dacoit Man Singh, from the Central Prison at Naini, Allahabad, where he was under death sentence, expressing a desire for his *darshan* before being hanged. Vinoba deputed Yadunath Singh, a retired major-general who was in-charge of his Kashmir trip, to meet him in the prison. After seeing him, Yadunath Singh went to the Chambal region and met several dacoits of Man Singh group. On return, he gave Vinoba his impression that some dacoits might surrender to him if he visited the area. Vinoba, therefore, expressed a desire to visit it and try for the conversion of the dacoits. The idea was welcomed to Chief Minister Dr. Kailash Nath Katju of Madhya Pradesh and,

consequently, when Vinoba was at Agra, the Union Home Minister Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant and the U.P. Chief Minister Shri Sampurnanand met him and it was decided to lend support to him in his peaceful efforts to make the dacoits surrender and give up their ways. The police authorities of the three concerned States of U.P., M.P. and Rajasthan were instructed to help in the process.

Vinoba started on his mission on 7 May, and in his first day post-prayer speech, he repeated the same idea about the criminals which he had expressed in Dhulia Jail some two years back. A few days later at Fatehabad, the first surrender of Ram Autar Singh took place, promising that he would commit no more crimes. At that time, Vinoba said explaining to some police officers present there: "No one is a born dacoit. It is a natural result of exploitation, miserliness, cruelty and callousness. . . . If we love dacoits, show kindness to them, transform our village into a family, the whole problem would be solved by itself. These dacoits are very simple, brave and fearless. If we change their line of action they will easily turn into saints." And he added: "The police cannot solve this problem. If they come to stay here, the dacoits will do likewise, and so also malice, hatred, aversion and animosity."

After some time, a dacoit Lachhi Pandit with considerable sum on his head, also came and placed himself and his family in Vinoba's hands. He had come from Bombay, having read about his missionary efforts in the papers. Thus the mission gradually gathered momentum, and on 19 May, eleven top dacoits led by Lokman alias Lukka, laid down arms at Vinoba's feet after the evening prayer meeting. Speaking on that day, Vinoba had said: "The three main causes of this (dacoit) problem are poverty, personal feuds and police. The fourth cause is party politics and elections. If these causes are eliminated, the problem will be solved by itself." On 22 May they took leave of Vinoba and went to the Jail, where Vinoba also met them the next day.

All this was not liked by some police officers. Sometimes,

there were revelations of the nexus between the dacoits on one hand and some police officers and politicians on the other. This probably led to the statement by the then Inspector General of Police, Madhya Pradesh, that Vinoba's mission had "delivered a blow to the morale of the police force." He also alleged that the dacoits were assured during negotiations of a lenient treatment. This was totally incorrect, and to it Vinoba's reaction was: "One sees God according to one's own light. It is incorrect to say that the dacoits who surrendered to me had been given any assurance. All along my tour, I have been publicly stating that it is for the law courts to decide whether they are to be acquitted or punished." As regards human touch in dealing with such cases, he observed: "The very fact that the President of India is empowered to commute death sentences is a proof positive that the Indian Constitution honours kindness and compassion."

To those Sarvodaya workers who did not relish their being put in prison, Vinoba said that he did not want to do anything against law, which has its limitations. All that he could do was to see justice done to them, to provide legal aid to them and, if possible, help to their families to lead a good life. He even did not want them to seek pardon, for none could escape the fruits of one's *karma*, action. The cases, however, did not take long, since they all pleaded guilty to genuine charges.

By the time Vinoba left the region, the number of surrendering dacoits was twenty. To utilise the changed climate generated there, a Chambal Peace Committee was constituted by the Sarva Seva Sangh under the guidance of Vinoba. It helped in the expediting of the cases in law courts of the three concerned States, collected funds for the reclamation of waste lands in the ravines and started a few cottage and village industries to train the dacoit families.

From this Chambal region Vinoba passed through Rajasthan on way to Indore, reaching there on 24 July 1960.

He stayed there till 25 August, and during this one month period he was going round the city, exhorting the people to make it a Sarvodaya city by taking up the programmes of Shanti Sena, sanitation, avoidance of law courts for the settlement of disputes and lifting the municipal affairs above party politics. In the first week of August, Vinoba personally participated in the sanitation drive. While he was there, elderly persons formed Sarvodaya Vanaprastha Mandal to devote themselves to social service in accordance with such ideas of Vinoba which concerned them, and the Sarvodaya workers also established Visarjan Ashram as a centre for serving the people.

When moving about in Indore, Vinoba happened to see indecent cine posters, which he described as "free and compulsory education in sexuality". He called a meeting of picture palace owners and they promised not to use them. But on their going back on the assurance, Vinoba decided to launch a satyagraha against them, which also spread to some other northern cities. However, he had made it clear that he was not against cine industry as such. If organized properly, it could serve as an effective medium for public education. But cinema owners could not be allowed to thrust obscene posters on the eyes of the people. He, however, regretted the increasing pursuit of pleasure by the young, since it weakened the moral fibre of the nation which alone was a guarantee against foreign invasion. Vinoba appealed to the women to come forward to help in the drive. The satyagraha did not last long, because of the prevailing tendency towards sensate culture in society, but it did leave a legacy which some women organizations now seem to be picking up.

Leaving Indore on 25 August, Vinoba visited some other parts of the State and returned to Indore on 28 September to resume his *padayatra* on the next day. While at Dhar on the 30th, he received a letter from Nehru requesting him to proceed to Assam "to heal the wounds" of linguistic riots there. Vinoba himself had been thinking of proceeding to



Assam, since that region had remained unvisited by him so far, but Nehru's letter finally determined it. However, he decided to go there in his tortoise manner.

There were certain issues which were repeatedly coming to the fore during this period, and Vinoba had to deal with them again and again. One of them pertained to the use of Gandhian types of resisting satyagraha for the success of the Bhoodan movement and for the redress of some other grievances of the people. There was a growing feeling that Vinoba was neglecting the use of Gandhian resistance, which had brought success to Gandhi and was his recognised legacy to the world. This feeling was shared even by foreigners influenced by Gandhi, and they too played no minor part in reinforcing the opinion in India. The second issue was related to the attitude towards politics and political power, and the third concerned the Bhoodan-Gramdan Movement which lagged far behind from its anticipated target of 50 million acres of land by 1957, with no prospects at all of its achievement.

The question of satyagraha in the present age in general and the Indian conditions in particular, was dealt with by Vinoba at every Sarvodaya Sammelan of the period and on some other occasions as well. His basic idea remained the same, though the language somewhat differed from time to time. He was insistent as already indicated in the context of Martin Luther King's meeting with him, that it was essential now to rise over the mental plane for a correct diagnosis of the situation and for a correct method of conflict resolution. He had also said to him then: "Let us not come between truth and ourselves. We ourselves often become an impediment and hinder truth from playing its role . . . . While meditating about satyagraha, that remarkable utterance of Jesus had helped me very much, 'Agree with thine adversary quickly'. If you ponder deeply over this sentence, you will get a clue for the type of satyagraha which is needed for the nuclear age."

Another matter which emerges from his statements about satyagraha in the nuclear age, is that Vinoba did not

think that the grosser forms of satyagraha would suit it. Hence his search for gentler and subtle forms which might prove as effective as an inter-continental ballistic missile is from a far off place. May be here Vinoba was entering a field of spiritual power which not many of us can find intelligible but in whose existence he had full faith.

As far as the particular conditions of India were concerned, he had been of the opinion that Gandhi's own satyagraha and his major objective of freedom from British yoke was very much conditioned by the then situation but the conditions are different now. There is democracy and the people against whom we have to conduct satyagraha, are our own. Therefore instead of copying the forms of Gandhi's satyagraha, we have to examine the basic philosophy behind them and change their forms in the context of the new conditions. This led him to lay down the following four principles:

1. The form of satyagraha should be positive, i.e., constructive, and not negative.
2. In case one form of satyagraha proves ineffective, instead of adopting a more extreme form, one should take to a milder or gentler form.
3. It should be such that its very name does not create fear in others, but rather gladdens them.
4. It should permit the truth to assert itself, not the Satyagrahi. In the context of the present democratic conditions, internal problems should be solved by constitutional means, including change through the ballot box, persuasion and societal change through people's own efforts.

All this, however, did not mean that he totally rejected negative forms of satyagraha. His rule for them was: "There is a field for 'negative' satyagraha where established values are disregarded. Should society leaders have differences on any matter, it cannot be made an excuse for satyagraha. It is one for popular education." It was in accordance with this rule that he had started satyagraha against obscene cine posters

and permitted it against the ejection of tenants. This period also witnessed some gentler forms of satyagraha undertaken by Vinoba himself. To this category belong the changes he had made in his *padayatra* routines in Andhra and Kashmir, and his refusal to have *darshan* in some temples without all his companions.

As regards his attitude towards politics and political power, it did not undergo any basic change from that of the earlier period. He was interested in what was termed "strength politics" and not power politics. By that term is meant something that strengthens the power of the people as against the power of the politicians. He had said in 1956: "Bhoodan is a movement of increasing the power of the people. There is no lack of politics in it, though it demolishes the present politics and builds up a new one by keeping away from the prevailing one. The new politics is called *lokaniti*, the politics of the people."

Vinoba kept aloof from power politics since he was against the undue importance given to it with the concomitant evils of envy, malice, talking ill of others etc., which work against the upliftment of the country. He felt that there were other more important things of which the people should have experience. While admitting that by acquiring power and authority, some service could be done to the people, he felt that there were some basic services which it could not render and in which the Sarvodaya workers should take interest. The examples of it are creating social climate for desirable new social values, creating amity among people, helping them to be self-reliant, etc.

Regarding co-operation between the government and constructive workers, he had discussed it at length at the Pandharpur Sammelan because of the generation of a new atmosphere for and hopes of co-operation between them by the Yelwal conference. After discussing both the pros and cons of the question in the context of the Sarvodaya ideal of a

government free society, he had come to the conclusion that since the *bona fides* of the government could not be questioned, the workers should be prepared to extend their co-operation to the government programmes, but they would have to be careful lest the whole of their burden fell on them. However, later Vinoba also warned the workers against such government aid as would cripple them.

The third question of the achievement of the target by 1957, in view of doubts about it, was probably first referred to by Vinoba at the Puri Sammelan. He then had said: "Believe me, I do not even worry for a moment. In fact, I hardly think in terms of fifty or a hundred million acres. After all, the land-gift movement is only a symbol. I have faith within me that Sarvodaya society would come into existence all over the world by 1957." And he added: "Find out if you have real faith in creating a nonviolent order. If you have that within you, your faith will be irresistible and it will shine. If even then the movement does not grow, the fault is yours."

All this was said by Vinoba to spur the workers to determined efforts, without minding whether the targets were achieved or not. This is clear from his later statements, explaining that his choice of the target date was aimed at imparting a sense of urgency to the movement. Moreover, this fixing of target date could also help in making necessary changes in strategy if the efforts did not appear to be succeeding. The efforts could provide only needed guidance for it. Lastly, he had done so taking into consideration the nature of the Indian people who could only be goaded to make efforts when the targets placed before them were very high.

However, after 1957, he attributed the non-attainment of the target to the lack of efforts and the paucity of workers, and to their various other attachments. But he was satisfied that he had done all that an individual could and the Yelwal Conference had put its seal of approval on his movement.

The feeling that he had achieved his purpose had developed in Vinoba after his success in Bihar and Orissa, and it was because of it that he had started spelling out other programmes as well like Shanti Sena and Sarvodaya-patra.

Finally, this period also found Vinoba expressing the idea that the three great forces in the world are those of *Vedanta*, Science and Trust. *Vedanta* here stood for the end of all conventional religions of the world; Science denoted discovery of the laws of the material world plus a scientific life on the part of individuals; and Trust implied mutual trust among human beings, groups and nations, without which conflicts would never cease between them. A Sanskrit *shloka* composed by Vinoba on it meant that Vedanta, Science and Trust are the three forces without which there could be no stability, peace and prosperity in the world.

Martin Luther King Jr. was not the only Westerner to meet Vinoba during this period. If he alone had been mentioned, it is because of the consideration of space. Many others too had been interested in his ideas and movement, and some of them were visiting India and meeting him. They were generally Western pacifists who felt a special closeness to Gandhi.

## *Gramdan Period: Later Phase*

VINOBA HAD DECIDED, as already told, to proceed to Assam in his old manner of *padayatra*. This had irked some who wanted him to reach Assam at the earliest. His reply to them was that if he did so, the Assamese would feel that they had committed some serious wrong to compel Vinoba to leave his other works and to hasten to Assam, but what had really happened was that they had been carried away by a wind blowing all over the country. When someone also complained to Pandit Nehru of it, his reaction was: "I would have done the same, had I been in his place."

Passing through Jabalpur and Varanasi, Vinoba reached Bihar on the Christmas Day in 1960. He reminded the Bihar people of their target of 32 lakh acres falling short by some ten lakhs, and for its fulfilment he launched the Bigha-Kattha movement of securing from every landowner one-twentieth of his cultivated land for the landless. The last date fixed for the fulfilment of target was 3 December 1961, the 3rd of December being the birthday of Dr Rajendra Prasad, their beloved leader. The movement, however, was conducted only for a few months in 1961-62, during which one and a half lakh Katthas were collected and 80 per cent of it was distributed immediately. The reason why the movement was conducted for a short period only was that after its initiation, the Bihar legislature under its Chief Minister Dr. Shrikrishna

Sinha passed an act imposing a higher levy on land, which naturally diverted the energy of the workers towards its implementation. But Dr. Sinha died and the two successive chief ministers gave up its implementation, despite their assurances to Vinoba about it.

This Bigha-Kattha movement involved a dilution of Vinoba's old demand for one-sixth of land, and when questioned about it, he said: "A mother has to stoop down to lift the child. We have also to lift the people and to take the movement onwards. I hope that by doing so we will get workers and through them land." The movement had another significance as well. It acted as a prelude to the Easy Gramdan movement initiated by Vinoba in 1963 and dealt with later.

There is another aspect of it. The Gramdan movement was experiencing a period of lull, leading to frustration amongst Sarvodaya workers. The proceedings of the Sevagram Sarvodaya Sammelan of 1960 reflected it, and with time the feeling was on the increase. Vinoba probably had sensed it, and his Bigha-Kattha movement can also be looked upon as involving a change of strategy to enthuse the workers again. It may, however, be mentioned here that Vinoba personally saw no valid reason for frustration as he observed later in Assam: "The little achievement we have made so far is not at all negligible. It is, in fact, inspiring. Till today no political party or organisation of this country has been able to distribute one million acres, nay, not even half as much land to the poor."

To resume the story of Vinoba's *padayatra*, he entered the Goalpara district of Assam on 5 March 1961 via West Bengal. In his first prayer meeting he asked the people to recognize the cosmopolitan character of the State as the abode of various religious and linguistic communities. He told them that with time it would prove to be an asset to them. In Goalpara he even visited those areas which had witnessed shocking scenes during the linguistic riots. At a meeting in Dhubri, he appealed to the people to uphold the

fair name of Assam. At Guwahati on 8 April, he said to the welcoming crowd: "I have come to Assam to speak little and to listen more. I wish to see this beautiful land spreading the message of love in the country."

He entered North Lakhimpur district on 12 May and decided to stay there for a year so that the whole district be declared a Gramdan area. Addressing a local youth organisation, he observed: "I am sorry to know of the language riots here. It is a narrow mentality which gives rise to such violence, and it is surprising that the people could be so parochial in this age of science. . . . Such narrowness may be excused in the older generation, but the youths should be the harbingers of tomorrow and not the followers of yesterday." Addressing women, he asked them to come forward to show a better way of resolving differences. And the women there did play an important role in arranging mass meetings and in getting about a thousand Gramdans. Vinoba was impressed by this women's power in the State. It contrasted with the paucity of male workers there.

It was suggested to Vinoba by somebody there that he should also visit Nagaland. Vinoba was willing to do so provided he could go there unprotected. The matter, it appears, was referred to Pandit Nehru by Shriman Narayan. Nehru was not prepared to allow him to go there unprotected. It could only be possible if Phizo approved of it. The matter went up to him in London but his cryptic reply was, "I won't say don't come. But I won't welcome." Hence the matter ended.

Vinoba returned to West Bengal via East Pakistan, whose National Government after some hesitation, permitted him to do so. Before leaving Assam, Vinoba had founded a new Ashram in North Lakhimpur, called "Maitri Ashram", signifying thereby its purpose to serve as a Friendship Centre. It has gradually developed into an important nucleus of constructive work in Assam. It is a women's Ashram like the Brahma Vidya Mandir of Paunar.



However, before taking up Vinoba's trek in East Pakistan, a few ideas of special significance must be mentioned here. A group of the Sarva Seva Sangh had met Vinoba in Assam and discussed with him for several hours various questions troubling the minds of Sarvodaya workers. One of them concerned the state of the movement. Vinoba told them: "It cannot be gainsaid that we could not make the trends (in the country) as congenial for our purpose as we wanted. This is due to some lack in our sacrifice and suffering. However, I am certain that God has rewarded us with far greater fruits than our labour deserved. Now you say that the movement has no prospects and that a new chapter should be begun. When I ponder over it, I find a far better basis for the movement today than it was two years back. And then this work is a basic work. Therefore, I feel that I must continue to devote myself to it. In order to complete the movement, you can surely add allied programmes to it and work them up, but we must not give up our base." It may be mentioned here that even leaders like Jayaprakash Narayan and Dharendra Mazumdar favoured change of programme at that time. The former was giving importance to the experiment of democratic decentralization which the Government had launched on the recommendations of the Balwantrai Mehta Report, and the latter was advocating an educative programme named "Grambharati".

The group also tried to elicit Vinoba's opinion on the Indian military action in Goa. Vinoba though not fully disclosing his mind on it, did observe that the military action could not be condemned outright. Nor could it be looked upon as an insult to nonviolence.

Speaking on his birthday in 1961, he made a significant observation about himself. He began by saying: "Whatever I know of myself I feel that there is nothing like an individual life left in me now. It is true that I exist as an individual entity, I also eat and drink, and this will go on till death. But I do not feel any personal desire or craving within me. I may make

mistakes in speech or behaviour, and I myself realize them but they do not worry me now. . . . I feel that my sole mission is to serve the Universal Being through the service of this country." He said 'this country' not out of any partiality for it, but because his own capacity was limited.

Vinoba set his foot on the soil of Pakistan on 5 September 1962, and left it on 21 September. In his address to the welcoming crowd on his entering into East Pakistan, he first expressed his gratitude to the Pakistan Government for allowing him to pass through its territory and then said that he did not feel being in a different country from his own. He also told them that he had come with a message of love and peace for the people of Pakistan; and on the third day he even disclosed that he had asked his fellow companions that in case he died there, he should be cremated there and that his ashes too should not be carried to India.

He continued to convey his message of Bhoodan to them as well, a message fully in consonance with the teachings of Islam or any other religion. On the very first day, he had received the gift of an acre, and by the time he left it, he had received 150 Bighas, which were distributed to the landless, both Hindus and Muslims, during the period itself. It was estimated that about one and a quarter lakh persons must have heard him during his stay there.

In special meetings a few embarrassing questions were sometimes put to him, but Vinoba's calm and clear thinking prevailed over them. For example, he was asked at a meeting of lawyers that there being paucity of land in East Pakistan, would he plead with the Government of India to part with some land for them? Calling it a good question, Vinoba remarked that the same problem faced India and that whatever the country, it would have to solve the problem by itself internally. As regards the Government of India, the solution could not be one-sided. There was a lot of land in West Pakistan and India could well make the same request to it. Such a solution could only be possible when there was a

confederation between the two countries. Charity was one thing and an action at state level another.

He was even asked about the communal problem and the basic democracy in force in Pakistan. About the first he observed that he did not find the masses communal either there or in India, and that communalism was a creation of politicians. When questioned about communal riots in India, he said that they militated against his philosophy. The question on basic democracy had arisen because of Vinoba's own reference to it at a place. Asked if he would like its introduction in India, Vinoba clarified: "I have not eulogised it in the sense you mean. I only tried to drive home the fact that it is a good beginning. If the Union Councils take up village development work in a spirit of love and compassion, they would promote real democracy." He also added that "whenever I have referred to Basic Democracy, I have done so with the idea that good work is only possible at the grassroots." A question on Kashmir was: "If you talk of love, then why do you not make efforts to solve the Kashmir problem?" Vinoba's reply stated: "This is a political question. I am not here to discuss politics. If I have to do that, I shall approach President Ayub Khan rather than friends like you." The reply was appreciated with laughter.

On his final day, Vinoba observed: "God has purposely created more than one race, one language, one religion to create diversity. He could have as well created a single race, a single religion, a single language. . . . Whatever the divisions and variations, we must realise that we are one as *homo sapiens*." During his 16-day stay there, 8000 copies of the *Gita Pravachan* were sold both to Hindus and Muslims. Between 500 to 700 persons used to enquire daily about his *Ruhul Koran*, which was shortly to be published, and none seemed to have taken seriously the tirade the paper *Dawn* was carrying on against Vinoba for compiling it. So much so, that the *Dawn's* own correspondent accompanying Vinoba was not happy at the attitude of his paper.

From there Vinoba entered West Bengal for the third time, his previous two stays having been transit visits on way to Orissa and Assam. This time he had come to tour it extensively and was there from 21 September 1962 to 9 August 1963, though on a few occasions he had to cross over to Bihar. The important places he visited this time included Shantipur and Navadwipadham, associated with Lord Chaitanya, Kamarpukur, the birth-place of Shri Ramakrishna Parmahansa, Santiniketan, founded by Dr Rabindranath Tagore, Gangasagar, a famous place of Hindu pilgrimage, and Calcutta where he stayed from 13 to 28 June. Then there were events like the Gramdan of Plassey, the Sarva Seva Sangh session at Arambagh, his last meeting with Pandit Nehru at Nabagram and the All India Khadi Workers' Conference at Nadia. It was a period which had witnessed the Chinese invasion in October greatly disquietening the public mind but failing to divert Vinoba from his mission of Bhoodan-Gramdan. He had called Gramdan "a defence measure" at Yelwal, and the Chinese invasion had only reinforced this idea of his.

At Shantipur, the birth-place of Lord Chaitanya, he said that the influence of great men on society was not confined to space and time. Sometimes their society had refused to treat their message as practical, as happened with Lord Chaitanya himself, but there was no alternative today to his message of love. At Kamarpukur where he was on 18 April, just twelve years after his first land gift, he said: "Rama worked with bow and arrows, Krishna won the world with flute, Gautam by Dhyanyoga, the yoga of meditation, and Ramakrishna through *tyaga*, renunciation." He declared that from that day he was commencing his *tyagayatra*, a pilgrimage of renunciation, a detached and liberated way of life which was also elevating. At Shriniketan, the rural institute in the Shantiniketan campus, he explained why no religion has the whole truth. He said that a person with religious experience was a seer who had seen God, but that happened in a state of

*samadhi*, which is a supra-human state, whereas religion is practised on a human plane by men and women before men and women and for their benefit. As such the verbal expression of *samadhi* experiences come to be influenced by those who are around us and imperfections creep in. This is true of scriptures as well. While some parts of theirs have permanent validity, others have only a temporary one. One has to discriminate between the two.

On his way to Gangasagar where he reached on 27 May, Vinoba touched Calcutta, where he said: "The first phase of my *padayatra*, I believe, has completed today, with my coming to Calcutta, or, perhaps, it will end at Gangasagar, where, God willing, I may reach in a few days. I had meditated on the beach of Kanya Kumari, Cape Camorin, by the sea, on the uncovered peak of Pir Panjal in Kashmir, and now I shall meditate at the confluence of the Ganga with the sea and that will mark the end of my *yatra*." And this he did after a dip in the sea.

His long stay in Calcutta was marked by many meetings in different parts of that metropolis, including a few of the intellectuals and a press conference. At one meeting he said: "Resist evil strongly and vigorously but do it without hatred or bitterness. It is a misconception that an enemy cannot be fought without hatred." At another meeting, he drew attention to an anomaly in the educational system in that both planning and unemployment continued side by side. While the Government detained communists, schools and colleges turned out unemployed youths who joined their ranks. At the press conference, when asked if the Nehru Government had turned its back on Gandhism, his reply was that it had not given up its respect for it, but a prophet is like a pole star when statesmen have to work in actual circumstances with the pole star as their guide. He further pointed out that the Government was veering round to the realization of the importance of cottage industries and that the Planning Commission had admitted their place in the national

economy. He declared, "Gandhism is not dead and cannot die. It is an eternal truth."

The last question was: "You believe in satyagraha and nonviolence. Then why did you not go to meet the Chinese aggressors at the border, either alone or along with young workers?" The answer was: "So far there has been no experiment in nonviolence on the international plane. If our people had realized that Independence had to be defended by nonviolence and satyagraha and that the building up of the army was wrong, they would have opposed its maintenance. That would have strengthened the country. At present an attempt is being made to create that atmosphere. There are problems of nonviolence that never arose during Gandhiji's time. The nuclear science then had not developed to its present level. However, when a democratic government had decided to use the armed forces, satyagraha against aggression would have only created confusion. And even if the Government had permitted and a few hundreds of us had gone there, we would have simply become a wing of the army. The armed forces draw their strength from public opinion. Satyagraha too can work only if there is popular support at its back."

Vinoba was very keen on the Gramdan of Plassey, and he felt that its Gramdan had washed away its old disgrace of 1757. At the Arambagh session of the Sangh, he defended the Vedchhi Sarvodaya Sammelan statement on the Sino-Indian conflict which had said:

"The Sino-Indian conflict presents the world today with a very grave problem and is a test for all those who believe in world peace and the concept of 'Jai Jagat', i.e., world unity. We believe that this conflict has been forced upon India, for India has been working consistently for a peaceful solution of the border question. An attempt by one party to force a decision by the use of arms when the other party is prepared for a settlement through peaceful methods, is an act of aggression. Therefore, though we remain firm in our

fundamental faith of non-participation in war, our full sympathy is with India.

“We hope that India will remain true to her policy of friendship towards all and enmity towards none, even in the present emergency. For, enmity can never check enmity. As an index of this attitude of enmity towards none, the door must always be kept open for negotiation, arbitration etc. We should be ready to come to a settlement which will preserve the honour and dignity of both nations. Even in the midst of conflict, we should see that hatred is not aroused against the people of the other country and that there is no war fever. Chinese residents in India and Indians in China should receive humane and considerate treatment.

“While we are alive to the gravity of the present situation and the limitation of our nonviolent strength, we wish to reiterate here our firm faith in nonviolence and peace. No good can come to anyone from armaments, much less from war. No problem can be solved by such means, especially in this Atomic age. Therefore, a believer in nonviolence or a Shanti Sainik cannot participate directly in any war. It is his first duty to do his utmost to end this war as soon as possible. . . . We believe that all men and women in China who have faith in peace will come forward and help in these efforts in the belief that war can only lead to evil.

“ . . . . We honour and admire the unprecedented spirit of devotion and sacrifice for the defence of the country that has been awakened among the people and we believe it would eventually be developed into the nonviolence of the brave. Therefore no one who believes in nonviolence should remain inactive at this hour of crisis. Rather, he must devote all his energies to the task of increasing the people’s power of nonviolence resistance. . . .”

The statement going to the front declared “a programme which in the present conditions could only be taken up after serious consideration. The important programme for the near is to awaken the capacity for non-violent resistance

among the people of border areas. Wherever suitable, Shanti Sainiks may visit border villages and inspire the people to adopt a programme of self-reliance and non-cooperation with the aggressor."

Vinoba characterised this statement as a balanced one and synthesising the various viewpoints. He also defended his own attitude in the matter against the criticism of some Western Pacifists and Sarvodaya workers. While admitting that his attitude did not correspond to the highest level of nonviolence, he said: "I don't contradict those who adopt the position that war is an unmitigated evil. I even respect them. But I also plead this much that, along with it, discernment too must be appreciated. . . . I neither want to be dogmatic nor can I become so. . . . My whole inclination is towards outlawing of war, towards opposing it. I do not take up any middle position. I am with those who are opposed to war, but despite being with them, I hold that there should be discernment."

At the first All-India Khadi Workers Conference, he pointed out that the direction of Khadi was not correct. Greater production of it for commercial purposes was not enough. The true spirit behind Khadi was one of self-reliance, not of subservience or dependence. The important thing was the outlook. The question was not of receiving assistance from the Government but one of pervading the entire governmental structure with the spirit of Khadi. He pleaded that Khadi be viewed in the context of Gram Swaraj, and interpreted as a part of a broader philosophy of life and development. He said: "Gandhiji had all along stressed that the wearer should be a spinner and the spinner should be a wearer. Browning has said, 'I was ever a fighter, so—one fight more. The best and the last!' The workers engaged in Khadi should imbibe this spirit and make a last determined bid to put Khadi on an independent footing. Khadi should be self-reliant or it should die."

Vinoba went to Orissa from Bengal via Bihar, and then



proceeded towards Raipur where the Sarvodaya Sammelan was scheduled to be held at the end of December 1963. He had not attended any Sammelan since 1959. There he outlined his three-fold programme of Easy Gramdan, Shanti Sena and Village-Oriented Khadi. The Easy Gramdan concept, referred to earlier, had acquired a form at the Arambagh session to work as a defence measure in view of the Chinese aggression. According to it, any village or some recognized part of it was to be considered as Gramdan if at least 75 per cent of its landowners holding 71 per cent of the total land donated one-twentieth of their lands to the Gram Sabha for the landless. They had also to agree to surrender their right of ownership over their whole land to the Gram Sabha on the condition that they or their heirs would not be deprived of it without their consent. They, however, would have the right to transfer it to the Gram Sabha or to any member-family of it with its consent. The tillers had also to undertake donating each year one-fortieth or any other part decided upon by the Gram Sabha, of the net produce of their land to the village fund. Those who earned in cash had to agree to donate one-thirtieth of their income or of the amount drawn for personal expenditure out of their business, or any other part decided by the Gram Sabha, to the village fund. The amount so collected was to be utilised for invalids and orphans of the village, for education and the establishment of village industries in it for its economic development. The Gram Sabha was to be composed of either all the adults of the village or by one from each member-family. It was to look after the villagers and its decisions were to be arrived at by consensus.

The Easy Gramdan idea was defended by Vinoba on the basis of its gentler process and as making allowance for individual incentive which was wanting in the old Gramdan concept based on social motive. As such, it was expected to prove more palatable to the land-holders. It had also the additional merit of ever keeping the spirit of donation alive, something which was not in the old concept.

The Shanti Sena programme was the same old one with added emphasis on making the movement a success by opening peace centres, forming youth peace corps, proper training, etc. The Village-Oriented Khadi was based on the ideas Vinoba had expressed at the Navadwipadham conference. He also dwelt with the question of participation in power politics at the sammelan. While accepting that there were both pros and cons of it, he was for eschewing it since the attainment of Sarvodaya objectives demanded full concentration of energy. He was also of the view that a process of disintegration was working in the world in the forms of power politics, casteism, communalism, ideological differences etc., which do great harm in this age of science, which demands a farsighted approach on the various questions. He reiterated his old idea that the days of politics were over.

After the Sammelan Vinoba proceeded towards Wardha, entering that district on 3 April 1964. A day prior to it, Guru Golwalkar of the Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh had met him at Seldoh and had a talk with him. On his death on 6 June 1973, Vinoba had said: "I had great respect for Guru Golwalkar. He didn't have any narrow caste feelings. He had an all-India perspective and faith in spirituality. He respected Islam, Christianity and other religions. What he wanted was that they should all join the Indian mainstream." Vinoba reached Sevagram on the 6th and Paunar on the 10th, staying there till the 20th, and thereafter resumed his *padayatra* in Wardha district to make it a Gramdan district, hallowed as it was by the presence of Gandhi and others. It was then that Nehru died in May and a month later the new Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri met him and was closeted with him for about two hours. However, Vinoba had to discontinue his trek because of typhoid, and when it was resumed in November, he had to give it up soon because of giddiness. He could later undertake the tour of a few districts of Maharashtra by car, starting on 9 July 1965 and returning to Paunar on 23 August to start for Bihar the

next day to help in the Storm Gramdan Campaign launched there at his suggestion.

The highlights of this period were the workers' seminar of the Sarva Seva Sangh at Paunar from 16 to 19 July 1964, the convention of Maharashtra workers at Paunar next month, talks with the members of the Planning Commission, nuclear explosion by China, taking to silence for an indefinite period from 12 September, fast on violence in Tamil Nadu over Hindi in February 1985, and the Sarva Seva Sangh session at Gopuri (Wardha) in May that year. At the workers' seminar he referred to his concept of satyagraha with increasing emphasis on the spirit rather than on action. He cited the instance of homoeopathic medicines whose potency increased with less medicine in higher triturations. He told Maharashtra workers that the movement could spread only if their quality improved with greater feelings of fellowship, humility and faith in Sarvodaya. He also told them that it would not be wise to get entangled in reconstruction work in Gramdan areas. If more and more Gramdans were obtained, a climate would be engendered in which the Government and the people would themselves come forward to shoulder that work. He said to the members of the Planning Commission that despite all talk about professions in democratic socialism, in actual practice the Government worked against the interests of those who were at the bottom and he cited several examples of it. His feeling at the China's explosion was that it was meant to terrorise the neighbouring countries, but nothing could cow down those who were determined not to be frightened. After all, those destined to die would die anyhow. He favoured India's response to it to renounce all weapons whatsoever.

Vinoba's decision to go on silence was based on his belief in its potentiality which, he felt, was largely unexplored, though some aspects of it were quite familiar, as for example its capacity to calm down an agitated mind. However, while announcing its decision on his birth-day, he made some

revealing statements about himself as well. He said that since his childhood, his tendency had been to keep away from psychological involvements which was a must if troubles of the mind were to cease. He also said that his temperament was not conducive to the public work he had taken up. He said: "It is the command of God that keeps me on move. . . . And the command is so distinctly audible as if I am hearing the voice directly. I have found solution in accepting its behest."

Before taking up his fast against the eruption of violence in Tamil Nadu, an important speech of his at the Brahma Vidya Māṅdir on 20 December that year must be mentioned. He observed in it that there was a dearth of collective will power in the country and the individual will power too was on decline. He said: "The tragedy is that we have established an entire philosophy against collective will power, which turned some great Hindus into individualists. They interpreted salvation in a sense just opposite to what it really implies. . . . Where there is the question of 'my salvation', there can be no salvation at all, and where there is salvation, there can be no place for my-ness." He also then regretted the Congress not accepting the advice of Gandhiji to convert itself into a Lok Sevak Sangh, with the result that instead of becoming a cementing force, it was a disintegrating agency. He wanted this state of affairs to change and the country to develop both collective will power and community strength.

The eruption of violence in Tamil Nadu had resulted from a declaration by the Central Government making Hindi the principal official language from the Republic Day in 1965. The violence caused intense agony to Vinoba, and in spite of all his opposition to fasts undertaken for any such motive, his inner voice compelled him to go on fast from 12 February. This perturbed many, from the President of India downwards, and the Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri deputed the Home Minister Gulzarilal Nanda to persuade him to give it up, but Vinoba declined to do so till three conditions were

met. They were: Violence to be eschewed in solving the language issue, Hindi not to be imposed on non-Hindi speaking people and English not to be imposed on Hindi-speaking people. By the 15th all the Chief Ministers had agreed to it, and on the 16th it was all calm. The two ministers from Tamil Nadu who had resigned on the issue, withdrew their resignations and Vinoba broke his fast on the 17th noon.

Here it would be proper to give Vinoba's ideas on the language issue. Speaking in November 1964 in the context of some remarks eulogising his services to Hindi, Vinoba had observed: "The truth is just the opposite. I did not serve Hindi but it served me a lot. Had I not the basis of Hindi with me, I could not have gone from Kanya Kumari to Kashmir and from Assam to Kerala and conveyed the revolutionary message of Bhoodan-Gramdan from village to village. I am therefore, highly indebted to Hindi. I have often said that the nation needs two languages, namely, the State language and the National language, even as men have two eyes. Knowledge of the two languages should, in my opinion, be compulsory. If a third eye, like Lord Shankar's third eye of wisdom, is required, then Sanskrit will be useful and the English language would serve as a pair of spectacles, which some need at times." He was also hopeful that if wisely propagated, Hindi was bound to be increasingly accepted by the non-Hindi speaking people, and he added: "The fact is that it was the non-Hindi speaking people, not the Hindi speaking ones, who have made it a national language." And he named Swami Dayanand, Lokamanya Tilak, Gandhi and others among them. At the same time, he wanted the northerners to learn some language of the south, and for it he was an advocate of the Nagari script being adopted as an alternate script by all other languages of the country.

The decision to go to Bihar had been taken during the Gopuri session of the Sarva Seva Sangh. He had then told the Bihar workers that if they undertake to raise a storm

campaign to secure ten thousand Gramdans within six months, he was ready to visit their State. They accepted the offer. On the announcement of its decision, an interesting question was put to him by Dada Dharmadhikari. He asked: "You were bringing about a revision in the conception of nullity and were trying to see action in inaction, then why this sudden jump into action?" Vinoba's reply was that nullity came near stormy action. Just as a fast moving machine seemed still, *karmayoga* and *akarmayoga* were quite close. Vinoba expected this campaign to be his last and the best, and he wanted a storm literature campaign also to be conducted along with that of Gramdan.

Vinoba set out for Bihar by car on 24 August from Paunar. Speaking to the inmates of the Brahma Vidya Mandir on the 23rd, he drew their attention to the critical international situation with special reference to India's relations with China and Pakistan, and said: "We should offer our best to meet this crisis, and I would regard myself blessed if God gives me an opportunity for *balidana*, final sacrifice, at this hour." And he pointed out, "I am also reminded of the last moment of Christ. You should bear well in mind that he told his disciples—'Love one another even as I love you'. And how did he love? He offered himself as a sacrifice for their sake. Gandhiji too did the same. It is time for sacrifice." Speaking at Wardha the same evening, he said: "During the freedom struggle days, the government used to lock our institutions, which increased both our dynamism and appeal. I would now like you to lock them of your own accord and move out for Gramdans." He also reminded the Maharashtra Government of his suggestion made in 1962 to make Wardha a Gandhi district.

While leaving Paunar on the 24th, he had three special instructions for the Brahma Vidya Mandir. First, no statue, picture or photograph of any mortal be placed in the Ashram. Second, the inmates should have no attachment towards the physical body and live in a spirit of love,

devotion and compassion, basing the Ashram life on physical labour. While using any article of consumption, they must test it on the three criteria—whether it was made by hands, whether it could be made in villages and whether full wages had been paid for it. Lastly, no further *samadhi* be erected in the Ashram. The *samadhi* of Vallabhswami, an old student of Vinoba and an important worker who had died in December 1964, be treated as *sarva-samadhi*. It may be mentioned here that though on the instructions of Vinoba himself, his ashes were buried at the place he used to sit in his room, it cannot be treated as his *samadhi* since the structure of a *samadhi* is very different from that of his hut.

Vinoba reached Patna on his birth-day in 1965 via Jabalpur and Varanasi. At Jabalpur, when the mayor promised to bring to an end to the misery of the scavengers by Gandhi Birth Centenary in 1969, Vinoba remarked: "Why wait for four years? I am sure if you succeed in improving their lot by 1966 or 1967, Gandhiji will not take you to task for it. Begin here and now, and do what you can to ameliorate the plight of your most down-trodden brothers." On reaching Patna, he observed: "My object is to raise the collective will power of the people so that, they may, by their own initiative and strength, establish Gram Swaraj in villages and Nagar Swaraj in towns." He met the people from various walks of life in June 1966 at the Ranipatra Ashram. He then said that gross actions had their limitations and that it had been his wish to enter into *sooksmā*, the subtle, after reaching the limit of gross actions. He said that this step would lead to an intensification of actions rather than their reduction. Thereafter, he took his first step in that direction by avoiding long speeches. After three months he made them still shorter and in December 1967, he made himself a sort of reference book, avoiding all aggressiveness. A further step was taken in June 1968 when he stopped public speaking, limited his conversations, stopped correspondence and instead of reading newspapers, read only the summary of new developments especially

prepared for him. Thus during this whole period, Vinoba went on reducing his outward public activities.

An analysis of the speeches of this period show that though, as usual, he touched on many a theme, some of them occurred more frequently than others. In the early period which had synchronised with the Indo-Pakistan War, he often referred to it, and to the two challenges of communism and communalism presented respectively by China and Pakistan. Reserving a delineation of his ideas on it for the next chapter, it should suffice here to mention that in Gramdan he found a proper answer to both the challenges. The other topics were the deteriorating condition of the weaker sections of society, the need of change of direction in Khadi work and the movement being conducted in Bihar. Only some examples of each are given below.

We find Vinoba getting more critical of the Planning Commission and of the Government development policies during this period. He said on 7 September 1965: "The Planning Commission intends to do justice to the poorest, the lowliest and the last only in 1985. A drowning man cannot be consoled by an assurance of saving him twenty years hence." Speaking at Daltonganj two months after, he said: "We feed our children with American milk. I wonder whether they would, on growing older, follow the doctrine of '*Bharat Mata Ki Jai*' or of '*American Mata Ki Jai*'. Could there be greater want of imagination? We seem to have lost all vision. It is a sad picture of barren indiscretion and loss of the sense of values. Independent in name, we are dependent in practice. I don't think that there may be so much gulf anywhere else in the world between the word and its content." And then he observed in July, 1966: "It is no pleasure to me to point out that though the persons in Delhi find the problem (of the poor) becoming more and more difficult everyday, they don't seem to realize the need of change in the direction of planning." And he added: "Though the persons connected with Planning are given to thinking and are economists, they



do not realize that conditions being different in different countries, the economy of one country cannot suit another. Pandit Nehru had begun realising it in his last days." Vinoba characterised the planning as 'Dhritarashtra Yojna', a *status quoist* planning.

Vinoba had often to address Khadi workers. He observed at Khadigram in September 1965: "Khadi has been so far supporting you, now the time has come for you to offer your support to it. Rest assured that Khadi cannot subsist on Government subsidy. If it is to stay, it can only do so on the basis of Gramdan. If you are not prepared to face the challenge, I would urge upon you to give it a decent burial on the occasion of Gandhi Centenary." A few days later, he disfavoured the system of discount allowed on the purchase of Khadi on the occasion of Gandhi's birthday every year since it was against the Khadi spirit and even suggested that the price be increased on such occasions so that the spinners might get better wages and justice be done to them.

Vinoba had also to clarify and defend his strategy of Storm Campaign from the various objections raised against it. They were three. It was argued that the strategy of getting thousands of Gramdans, implied in that campaign, was not a correct one, since it sacrificed quality to quantity when the former was much more important. The second objection was that it would prove more effective from the viewpoint of societal change if efforts were concentrated in some selected intensive Gramdan areas to present a few models of reconstruction for others to observe. This would prove infructuous. The third objection, and it was more widespread, was that merely getting Gramdan pledges would not do. Simultaneous steps must also be taken for the fulfilment of the terms of those pledges. Vinoba did not agree with any of them, and he had his own reasons for it.

As regards the first, he could not find any inherent conflict between quality and quantity. To a person who asked him a few days after his arrival in Bihar why he wanted to have a

large number of Gramdans preferring quantity to quality, he had replied: "May I ask you why you should require lakhs of soldiers for the army! Will not quality soldiers like Napoleon and Wellington serve the purpose?" And then he also added: "There is no conflict between quality and quantity. However, even big persons hold that the two don't go together. This is a great illusion."

With reference to the second objection, Vinoba once said: "If the English had asked us to present a model of Swaraj in some one province, we would have told them to leave the country and then we would try our luck. It is a mistake to hold that the idea of Gramdan would spread if we present a model of it." On another occasion he said that no models ever brought about a revolution. A model was useful in the field of education but not in that of societal reconstruction.

As regards the third suggestion, Vinoba claimed that since he had personally great patience and faith in God, he had no objection to solid work done slowly. But what the age demanded was that it should be done at the highest speed. He also said: "Many say to me that as soon as a Gramdan is obtained, the work of reconstruction should begin immediately. You must be aware that there is engagement first, then comes marriage and it is later followed by family life. Getting Gramdan corresponds to an engagement, fulfilment of its terms to that of marriage. After that will begin the work of reconstruction, which can have no end."

It was because of such views, with which Jayaprakash Narayan too was in accord, that the Storm Campaign concentrated first on getting as many Gramdans as possible, including *block-dans* and *zila-dans*, and then at the time of the Rajgir Sarvodaya Sammelan when Bihar-dan was announced, the requisite conditions for it having been fulfilled, Vinoba then asked the workers to concentrate on the second stage of the fulfilment of the terms of Gramdans with even greater speed. He gave them the time of one year to accomplish that task. However, he could not further stay in

Bihar to inspire and goad them, and once having left Bihar he did not return to it for reasons to be dealt with later in chapter twelve.

However, before closing this chapter, some more facts about Vinoba pertaining to this Bihar period need mention. He had fallen ill in December 1965, which forced him to stay at Jamshedpur till April 1966. Prime Minister Shastri had come to meet him there before leaving for Tashkent and had a 90-minute talk with him. Vinoba had welcomed the Tashkent agreement and was overwhelmed with feelings on the news of Shastri's death. All that he could say was that "he had to work very hard".

While the Storm Campaign concerned villages, Vinoba had not forgotten cities and towns, and he outlined his concept of Nagar Swaraj at Muzaffarpur in October 1965. He then said: "You will ask me if there is any programme of Sarvodaya for cities. There should also be Town or City Swaraj like Gram Swaraj. What I mean is that an urban municipality or city corporation should be free of the influence of political parties and that its members should serve the city people without any bias, be it of party, sect or creed. Members of the political parties may be elected, but they should work as servants of the people and not as members of their parties, in the manner of Hindus and Muslims who go there as citizens and not as devotees of Hinduism or Islam. I recognize the role of parties and appreciate their working in Assemblies or the Parliament, where policies are discussed and decided. But in a Panchayat or municipal board you do not face such problems and you have only to see that the people of the town get milk and other necessities at reasonable rates, that the sick and the infirm are adequately attended to, that education is duly imparted to children, that the town is neat and clean and its roads are well maintained, etc. There is no question of parties in these matters."

The realist Vinoba had also been asking the workers that while explaining the desirability of Gramdan to the people,

they should also tell them to restrict their sexual indulgence, to make greater efforts, to share what they had with others and to take the consent of all before doing things, since the key to their happiness lay in them. They were also to be reminded of the old lines, "Live a life of poverty, God is attained by patience", and told that mere Gramdan would not bring change in their conditions.

The Bihar period also witnessed Vinoba giving a new programme to the country, a programme which continued during his later Paunar years as well and which has been an important legacy of his. It is that of *Acharyakul*. Vinoba was basically a teacher, both as an informal teacher of the people and as a formal teacher of students, whether children, adolescents or youths. The whole process of Sarvodaya revolution is primarily educational. No doubt, it simultaneously thinks of structural changes in society along with the change in the values of individuals, but for structural changes in society it relies on persuasion and not compulsion. If the programme of the *Acharyakul* emerged late, the primary reason was that he had given priority to the programme of compassion—the Bhoodan-Gramdan.

We have already indicated that Vinoba had pleaded for change in the educational system of the country on the very day the country had attained Independence. But it did not happen at all, and Vinoba had to observe in 1968: "So far as education is concerned, we have made every possible mistake, gone wrong everywhere. Education today has no spiritual dimension. It is no longer based on principles which in the past have been India's strength and stay and which are still its strength today. There is no productive work in our current education. It keeps knowledge and work apart. There are no jobs for those who pass out of our colleges, and the result is that if we educate people, we add to unemployment, and if we do not educate people, we add to ignorance." When Vinoba told Dr Zakir Hussain, the then

President of India, who had come to Bihar to meet him, of the above choice between uselessness and ignorance, the latter had remarked: "Vinobaji, you said that educated are useless for work, but it is worse than that. They are useless as well as ignorant." And Vinoba had to concur with him.

Vinoba was convinced that the teachers and all others engaged in the formation of public opinion could become a force in society for bringing about a revolution. At the same time, he wanted them to think for themselves. He said at a meeting of the vice-chancellors, principals and other educationists of Bihar, convened by the then Bihar Chief Minister Karpuri Thakur, who also held the Education portfolio, in 1967: "I don't want to be treated as an oracle. I want people to study my ideas thoroughly, to discuss them fully and to accept what they find to be satisfactory in them. There is an ancient saying that the seer who proclaims the truth is like a signpost at the crossroads of the path of Dharma. The signpost only points the way to a place. It does not carry you bodily there. . . . Similar is my attitude." He also urged them to assert as an independent force. He said: "The moral leadership of the country should be in the hands of teachers. They must show themselves capable of ridding the land of its miseries of poverty, disease, ignorance and ever-increasing violence."

As a result of it and some other addresses among the teaching community, the *Acharyakul* was formed on 8 March 1968, at village Kahlol near the ancient university of Vikramshila, with the objectives of raising the moral stature and the social status of teachers, of getting the principle of their independence recognised on the lines of that of the judiciary, of building the power of the people which is opposed to the power of violence and different from that of the law, of fostering attitude and disposition conducive to world peace, and of initiating a nonviolent revolution in education. A member of the *Acharyakul* had to sign a pledge, as advised by Vinoba. He had said in 1968: "There should be

a form of pledge which teachers may sign. It should contain a statement that we regard it as a duty of our position to offer our guidance to the whole nation, and that we will, therefore, take no part in party politics or power politics, whether local or national. It should also declare that we regard ourselves as soldiers of peace, armed with the best of all weapons for peace—education, i.e., the education for true knowledge. What better tool can there be for the establishment of peace? with that weapon in our hand and our students by our side we shall carry out our duty, working for the peace of the whole country, and maintaining our complete freedom from political entanglements.”

That is how *Acharyakul* came to be formed as a wing of the Sarvodaya movement. Its subsequent history belongs to the later period.

## *Rapport with Pandit Nehru*

SURPRISING THOUGH IT be, the first occasion on which Vinoba met Pandit Nehru was at the Constructive Workers Conference held at Sevagram after the death of Gandhi to which a reference has already been made. This first interaction gave birth to a rapport between them which increased with time and lasted till the death of Nehru, leaving a goodwill for his daughter Indira whom Vinoba looked upon as a niece.

The first meeting had taken place at a time when the constructive workers were highly dissatisfied with the Government of India's policy regarding Khadi and village industries. This resentment was particularly against Nehru, whose disagreement with the economic ideas of Gandhi was well-known. But Vinoba's speech at the conference was, in every way, very comforting for him. He had assured Nehru that he did not look upon him as a representative of the Government but as a member of Gandhi family which they all had been for the last twenty five years. He even claimed the right of guidance from him, as Gandhi's nominated heir. Realizing the difficulties faced then by Nehru, he had said: "We belong to you and you to us. Your difficulties are our difficulties. Tell us what you want from us and we would do it." He, at the same time, told the constructive workers that the Government was not indifferent towards their work. In

fact, it had had no opportunity till then to promote village industries. Revealing his own attitude, he said: "Even if the Government promotes textile mills, I would not make an issue of it. I would do my best to make Khadi self-reliant. If I am not able to do so, I would not find fault with the Government, but take it as my own shortcoming. If we could promote Khadi during the British regime, we can do it as well now."

All this combined with the fact that the method of nonviolence resistance did not have much appeal for Vinoba as evidenced by the fact that he was not favourably inclined to name the association of those who believed in the ideas and ideals of Gandhi as "Satyagraha Mandal", must have further impressed Nehru of his cooperative attitude. And then Vinoba's offer of his services to Nehru was not mere verbosity. He reached Delhi at his request at the end of that very month for relief and rehabilitation work among the refugees in and near about Delhi, later went to Hyderabad at his suggestion and finally to Assam.

Despite all this, the two differed on the issue of planning or the economic development model, but this difference was more than offset by their faith in the honesty and sincerity of each other and by the support Nehru always received from Vinoba in matters of foreign policy. This support was natural, since the foreign policy of Nehru in Independent India was merely an application and extension of the principles on which the foreign outlook of the Indian National Congress was based in the pre-independence era. Nehru had been its chief architect then, and Gandhi had agreed with him. The fact was that Nehru had imbibed well Gandhi's ideas of nonviolence and peace in that field, and his policy, naturally then, enjoyed Vinoba's full support, who was fully aware of the limitations imposed on Pandit Nehru as the head of a representative government of the people, and he was convinced that Nehru was doing his best under the circumstances, guided by the legacy of Gandhi and playing



more the role of a leader and moulder of public opinion than of its follower.

There was also an additional factor for the rapport between them. Gandhi's death had created a serious void for Nehru. He had not only lost a political leader in him but a "Bapu" as well, on whom he always relied for advice in matters both public and private. That void must have been increasingly felt by him as his old trusted comrades and friends began disappearing by death one by one, leaving behind the next generation who could not be expected to play the role of independent advisors. This brought him closer to Vinoba, who was gentle and without ego, but, at the same time, fearless, frank and objective. As time passed, Nehru must have come to recognize these qualities in him more and more, and then the Bhoodan Movement and the originality of Vinoba's thinking must have further convinced him that Vinoba was a person whom he could consult and rely upon. It was probably because of it that he had asked Shriman Narayan to keep in touch with Vinoba's tour programme, so that he could meet him from time to time. Nehru had said at a public meeting held on Vinoba's birthday in 1963: "I have been in close contact with many great people and in my official capacity I have come across many eminent men but there is no such person among them as Vinobaji in the whole world. He is true product of our India. He is unique mould of Mahatmaji."

As a result of it they met seven times between 1954 and 1963 before Nehru passed away in 1964. On these occasions Nehru used to take Vinoba into confidence and consult him on issues that perturbed his mind. They met mostly alone and Nehru himself used to take down notes of his talks with him. They sometimes corresponded too, Vinoba's letters being invariably in Hindi. During his last days, Nehru was also realizing more and more the relevance of Gandhian economy in the conditions of this country. This was mentioned by Vinoba in reply to a question in Calcutta in June 1963 at a press conference, and it is corroborated by

what Nehru said at a seminar in New Delhi on 22 September, 1963. To quote him: "We put up big steel plants and the like, which please us and build up our morale and all that, but hundreds of millions of people cannot be asked to wait for some future age for betterment in their living standards. It is too much for them to do so. Therefore, we have to think also of other kinds of developments for the mass of our people, even if it raises them only slightly." And then he added: "Therein lies the virtue of Mahatma Gandhi's teachings."

A month prior to his death, Nehru desired Vinoba to be in Delhi since he wanted to consult him on some issues, but Vinoba could not do so. On the news of his death, tears welled up in his eyes several times, tears not of grief but gratitude, for Vinoba was above grief over the death of any person. At his evening meeting that day, he said, with reference to a suggestion of some journalist to Nehru to nominate his successor and Nehru's reply that he looked forward to live many more years, did not mean any desire on his part to cling to life for its own sake. It was a longing to complete the important work that lay before him. Vinoba had been especially impressed by Nehru's adherence to certain moral principles and values not only in his personal life but also by his efforts to conduct the public affairs of the country on their basis.

With regard to the concrete issues of defence and foreign policies, we find Vinoba agreeing with Nehru from the very beginning. Before leaving for his visit to the USA in 1949, Nehru had laid the foundation of the National Defence Academy near Pune. At that time, he had expressed the oddness of life that he was doing so, though he was an advocate of nonviolence and peace. Vinoba's comment then on his observation was: "Such contradictions, as Nehru referred to, are found in humankind as a whole. Man or woman is composed both of spirit and body, and their demands appear to be contrary to each other. However, since life depends upon both, he or she is forced to satisfy both, and that is why

it looks odd. This is true of a country as well, which too possesses both a spirit and a body. . . . The spirit of India is nonviolence and we have to reach that stage of the spirit, but, prior to it, restricted militarism becomes unavoidable in certain circumstances. We need not be ashamed of it." One may also mention here that Nehru had once told Vinoba that he had been forced to increase country's military strength because of the Chinese threat.

The first challenge to the policy of Nehru came in the early sixties on the issue of Goa, when he was compelled to take military action. Vinoba was not happy about it, but considering the Portugal's intransigency to come to a settlement unlike France, he was not prepared to condemn Nehru for it, as already mentioned in the previous chapter. Then followed the strained relations between India and China on the border question. On repeated questioning, he once said: "The incident on the Sino-Indian border has created a wave of excitement all over the country. But we should realize that excitement has become outdated in this age of science, which demands a calm, cool and calculated judgement." And he added: "India and China are bound to come together in friendship and love. The (present) great displeasure is just a prelude to that friendship. In the next step, the 'dis' will disappear and 'pleasure' alone would remain."

Once finding two persons discussing excitedly Tibet and China, one for each side, he told them that all knew that the Tibetans did not like the Chinese and that the Chinese action was not proper. But the matter had to be considered coolly and objectively. It was somewhat natural for a country more advanced scientifically to attack an undeveloped one and for the people of a more populated country to move to a less populated one. The Chinese action in Tibet could also be born of a fear of some external invasion. Knowing neither the Chinese nor the Tibetan language, it was not possible to correctly gauge the attitude and thinking of the two peoples.

Thus Vinoba stood for a calm and dispassionate understanding of the Sino-Tibetan issue. At the end of his Kashmir tour, as mentioned in the eighth chapter, he had said that India's granting asylum to Dalai Lama and other Tibetan refugees was no political action but one based on compassionate grounds and in accordance with the teachings of Lord Buddha. Despite it all, when China invaded India and the Government decided to resist it by armed force, Vinoba saw no reason to blame India, though he was convinced that no good could result from an armed conflict. He had found China an aggressor, since India had not thought in terms of war and was prepared to thrash out the border dispute by negotiations. He felt that the China's action was born of an expansionist motive, and her use of the language of communism was merely to justify its conduct in the eyes of the communist world. India, he said, had never been expansionist as testified by her history. Hence his sympathy lay with India, and he defended Nehru's policy and action against the criticisms of the Western pacifists, who even wanted the Gandhians in India to oppose the war efforts of their national government. Vinoba did not favour it, but did express the hope that the Indian Government would fight without enmity or hatred, doing it simply for the reason that it had become necessary for it to take to armed fight. At the same time, he was always urging Nehru not to miss any opportunity for a peaceful settlement of the dispute, including acceptance of the Colombo Proposals, though they did not meet the Indian viewpoint. He had thus strengthened Nehru's hands in that hour of crisis by voicing publicly his support for Nehru's attitude and policy against those who thought otherwise. He even praised Nehru for getting those proposals accepted by the Parliament with the help of his prestige and influence.

Vinoba's view had been that the main struggle with China lay on the ideological front, and to strengthen the country on that front, Gramdan movement must be made successful, since it would help in removing India's poverty and uplift the

condition of the weaker sections of society, a condition which created a fertile soil for communism. However, he never blamed the Chinese people for what had happened. He did not identify them with their government, since these days there is a growing distance between the people and their governments everywhere. He attributed the Chinese withdrawal to its failure on the front of world's public opinion, including world communism. But he was keen for good relations between the two countries who were faced with similar problem of poverty and whose experience of imperialism had also been much the same. Therefore, both the countries should realise the need for a harmonious relationship between them, and he was ultimately hopeful of that. He once said that if there was a Mao-Tse in China, there was also a Lao-Tse, and it belonged as much to the latter as to the former. With his way of thinking, Vinoba probably thought that Lao's influence would prove more abiding.

As regards relations with Pakistan, it centred round the issue of Kashmir, and we have seen his views expressed elsewhere on the question when he visited East Pakistan. We may, however, draw special attention to his view that the solution of that question lay in an Indo-Pak confederation, which could only come about if the people of the two countries favoured it. It was not something to be imposed by force. He was against Kashmir's right of secession from India because of its Muslim majority. He once said: "We were goaded into partitioning India by the exigencies of circumstances. We do not want to reverse history, but it would be a mistake to come to an agreement that since Kashmir has a Muslim majority, it has a right to secede and it should not remain in India." In this matter also his views tallied with those of Nehru.

Such was the position when Nehru died. The later armed conflicts between the two countries belong to the periods of his two successors, Lal Bahadur Shastri and Smt. Indira Gandhi. About the 1965 Indo-Pakistan War, which had originated with Pakistan's attack on Chhamb sector in

Kashmir, Vinoba had observed: "A war is going on between India and Pakistan. After giving careful thought to it, I have reached the conclusion that this war had been imposed on India and I, therefore, support the stand taken by the Government. But this does not mean that I am happy about it. I am sure that the Government also feels the same way." The war ended with the Tashkent Pact in which Kosygin, the Prime Minister of the USSR, had played the role of an intermediary. Vinoba welcomed the Pact, and was especially pleased to see the provision in it for peaceful settlement of all disputes without recourse to war between the two countries.

The second Indo-Pak war had resulted from the events of Bangladesh in 1970. The problem of the influx of refugees from that part of Pakistan into India had created a very serious problems for it. Shrimati Indira Gandhi had shown commendable patience in the matter. She even visited several countries to prevail upon them to use their influence on Pakistan to exercise restraint in Bangladesh, but they were not prepared to do so. In the circumstances, Vinoba had even favoured recognition of the independent government of Bangladesh, though it could involve giving of military aid to those fighting for their independence. He did so because there was no democracy in Pakistan and General Yahya Khan was in no mood to see it thrive. Ultimately, the situation went on worsening and a state of war developed in that region, involving India into it.

Vinoba was not sure as to who started the armed conflict, but the question being debatable and also immaterial taking into consideration the action of the Pakistan Government in Bangladesh, he supported India's action. He was even criticised for it by some western pacifists, but he stuck to his views. However, in line with his pacifism, he was happy that the Indian army had behaved in an exemplary way and that the country had fought the war in accordance with the principles of the *Gita* handing over the country after victory

to the people of Bangladesh themselves. Vinoba was as opposed to war fever then as he had ever been.

Vinoba's view was that the only way for the world to escape from an annihilation by war is to accept disarmament by all countries at the initiative of the UNO, and the UNO should have an unarmed peace brigade at its disposal to intervene on the occasions of conflict between any two countries. He had also warned Indians, in the context of Bangladesh war, of any exultation in their hour of victory to avoid creating any sense of humiliation in Pakistan at her defeat.

Thus, Vinoba had always been standing for restraint and calm action, even when he was against opposing the war efforts of the Government of India in wars not of her seeking but imposed upon her.

## *Final Return to Paunar*

VINOBA WANTED TO remain in Bihar to complete the work of consolidating the pledged Gramdans, but it was not to be and he had to leave for Sevagram after the 1969 Rajgir Sarvodaya Sammelan. The circumstances in which he had to do so have been revealed in some detail by Kanti Shah in a voluminous work, titled *Jayaprakash*, jointly edited by him and Narayan Desai for the Jayaprakash Narayan Amrit Kosh. According to it, Badshah Khan, the Frontier Gandhi, had come to India to attend Gandhi Birth Centenary celebrations and was eager to meet Vinoba. He was scheduled to do so on the occasion of the Rajgir Sammelan, but he could not reach there because of the Ahmedabad communal riots. Hence his meeting with Vinoba was only possible if Vinoba reached Sevagram. Vinoba was unwilling to do so. It was not his wont to leave any work taken up by him halfway and the Bihar work needed his continued presence. On the other hand, Jayaprakash Narayan who headed the Reception Committee arranging Badshah Khan's tour in India, strongly felt that he must go to meet Badshah Khan and even expressed some resentment on Vinoba's reluctance. Consequently, Vinoba decided to leave for Sevagram and from there he naturally went to Paunar. Once having reached there, he stayed at that place till his death in 1982.

However, the Bihar work was not off his mind and when



Jayaprakash Narayan devoted himself to Gramdan work in Musahari in Muzaffarpur district, he felt that he must also return to Bihar. Jayaprakash Narayan came to know of it and he wrote to Thakurdas Bang, a prominent Sarvodaya worker and leader living at Wardha: "It is encouraging that Baba is thinking of returning to Bihar. But I feel that he should not come at this time. All of us belonging to Bihar are at present undergoing a sharpening process, and if he comes there at this time our bluntness would get covered up under his aura. If we are made of steel, we shall get sharpened. If our iron is raw, how long the aura borrowed from Baba would do?" This made Vinoba drop the idea of returning to Bihar, but he continued to take interest in work there, especially in Saharsa district to which he attached particular significance since despite being the smallest district of Bihar, it bristled with all those problems which plagued the whole of India. He felt that the experience acquired there would also prove useful elsewhere.

But in spite of all Vinoba's keenness and all-out efforts of workers in Saharsa, there was no spectacular progress and Vinoba summoned its leading workers to Paunar. They met him on 10 September 1973, when Vinoba asked them either to complete the work within three months (this was later extended to four months) or to collectively enter the Ganga, which as he later interpreted as Lok Ganga meaning thereby that in case there was no satisfactory progress, they were to give up the work in Saharsa altogether and go to other parts of the country for work. The workers deliberated amongst themselves and met Vinoba again on the 12th. They accepted his ultimatum on two conditions. First, they wanted an additional period of three or four months for preparatory work before taking the plunge and secondly, they wanted his presence in their midst.

At this Vinoba reduced their burden by half, saying that he would be satisfied if they accomplished fifty per cent of work in the setting up of Gram Sabhas, could get 50 per cent

donors in the village to donate one-twentieth of their lands for the landless, and distribute it and fulfil other Gramdan conditions. As regards his presence, he said: "It is a game of chance which could either result in hundred per cent success or hundred per cent failure. And even if your optimism be correct, the success will be mine and not yours. I would never welcome such a success even when it be hundred per cent, if it hinges on one man's success and means a retardation of your strength. The success in Saharsa is essentially a means to an end. The end is the development of your strength and that of the people." However, he assured them that though he would not be physically there with them, they would feel the spirit of his presence.

Thus we find that though the Saharsa workers were keen to have him in their midst, he didn't agree to it and the reason he advanced was practically the same which we find in Jayaprakash Narayan's letter to Bang, cited above. But there could possibly be other reasons as well. About three years had elapsed since Vinoba had left Bihar and he was then at an age when, after such a long gap, it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to resume an activity again. This was still truer of Vinoba who had since then taken to *sookshma karmayoga*, the subtle path of action. Vinoba had great faith in the capability of *abhidhyana*, meditation, which is reflected in what he had said to the Saharsa workers about the spirit of his presence with them.

It may also be mentioned here that once when Vinoba learnt that some were faulting him for leaving Bihar, he said: "I gave Bihar ample time twice and I left it both times hoping that others would complete the remaining work. After these two stays, it would not be graceful for me to go there again. It is true that my going there would impart an impetus to the work. I have there some influence over ministers and others, but I would not like to use my personal influence over them." He, however, never made any reference to the circumstances compelling him to leave Bihar for it was not in his nature to

hold others responsible for any action of his, even if he could rightly do so.

Before proceeding further, however, it would be better to complete the story of Saharsa since it has been taken up. All efforts to complete the work there proved in vain, and, ultimately, it was altogether given up in May 1974 on the advice of Vinoba himself, who cared little how it would affect his reputation and prestige. This step of his was appreciated by Dharendra Mazumdar, one of the top leaders of Sarvodaya in his own right, who praised Vinoba for sensing the need of that advice and for giving it.

Vinoba's experimentation in *sookshma-pravesh*, a special feature of this period, had had its beginning during the Bihar Storm Campaign. He had even once said that he was thinking of settling down at some place, to giving up speaking and taking to meditation, and now at Paunar he got an opportunity for it. An obvious explanation for this experimentation would be that at his age of seventy-five when his physical strength was on the wane, it was but natural for spiritual-minded Vinoba to think on these lines. However, without fully contradicting this view, one may say that this experiment, as hinted earlier, was born of his intense conviction that in their effectiveness actions were inferior to speech and speech was inferior to what passed in one's mind. Speaking at Rajgir, Vinoba had observed: "It is said that best is action, then comes speech and still later what passes in one's mind which only God knows. But Baba's idea is just the reverse. According to his understanding, the minimum impact on the word and the inner self is of action while words have greater impact. But as compared to the power of words, the powers of the mind and heart, meditation, *samadhi* and becoming a zero are far far greater."

Explaining the whole thing in some detail, Vinoba further remarked in 1972: "It is already known that I have been in *sookshma* yoga and engaged in *abhidhyana*, meditation, according to the Shastric practice. But in keeping with our

cultural tradition, I have given it a new content. To the extent the mind is cleared of all mundane thoughts and restored to its clean state of emptiness, to that extent it makes its impact felt on the world outside. . . . Now I have come to the conclusion that the service of a man engaged in *abhidhyana* with his ego reduced to zero would pervade the entire world. . . . This I have realised through experimentation and practice over a period of forty years or so. My present experiment is to find the results of *karma*, action, through *akarma*, inaction, when one transcends the state of action.”

This experiment carried an additional advantage as well. Vinoba did not take the words of anybody as authoritative, and he was against anyone treating him as an authority. The various steps that he took in this experiment reduced the reliance of others on him. They were those of *kshetra-sannyasa* or ‘detention’ by confining himself to the Paunar Ashram, prolonging the daily period of silence, imposing restrictions on the interviews of outsiders and the rule that questions be submitted to him in writing to avoid strain on his ears because of their hearing difficulty. He, however, retained freedom for himself to speak whenever he felt like doing it. He also refused to be pestered by questions on Indian politics and read in the newspapers only the portions marked out for him for the purpose. This too he regarded as a concession to others, which was not expected to last long.

Once when Acharya Tulsi referred to the conditions in the country and hoped that he would comment on it, Vinoba remarked: “When several persons once advised me to say something about the condition of the Congress, I told them that ‘thereby you want me to assume three responsibilities—the responsibility of thinking about the Congress besides my own work, the responsibility of not only of thinking about the Congress but also of forming an opinion, and, lastly, the responsibility of tendering my advice without being asked for it. It is a burden I cannot bear’.”

But this did not mean that he was indifferent to world happening, its trends and to what was happening in his own country. His interest in the developments in Bangladesh has already been dealt with in the previous chapter. It certainly had lessened with time and this was for two reasons. First, he did not expect Mujib's success to lead to any development of people's power there, and, secondly, he had left the timing of the recognition of the independent Government of Bangladesh to the Prime Minister as its best judge, since she commanded better sources of information.

And then his interest in the realization of Sarvodaya society never lessened. The subjects of his *abhidhyana* were Brahma Vidya, the knowledge of the Supreme Being indicative of the in-dwelling spirit, Devanagari script, Acharyakul, Shanti Sena and Gram Swaraj, indicative of a nonviolent revolution based on Gramdan and with an emphasis on village-oriented economy. We deal here only with the last item of social revolution. The Saharsa work was a part of the efforts for this nonviolent revolution. Another programme outlined by Vinoba and related to it was that of *Lok Vastra*, people's cloth. It allowed use of yarn spun on 8 to 10 spindle Charkhas operated by electricity and weaving on power looms. The only condition imposed was that the cloth so produced would be consumed in the village itself and not sold outside. Vinoba expected that besides employment potentiality, it has the merits of infusing a community feeling in the village and taking it towards self-reliance, especially in the primary needs of life. He also expected it to serve as a spark for igniting the revolution.

As against the pessimism of most regarding India and the world, Vinoba, as ever, remained an optimist. When G.S. Pathak, the then Vice President of India, asked him when would there be peace in the world? he said: "I hold that the world is moving fast towards peace. The present lack of it is indicative of its last stage. It is like a lamp burning brilliantly before going out." And he added: "I always give the example

of a circle whose two extremities are closest to each other. The same applies to nonviolence and nuclear weapons.”

Once told of the increasing erosion of values among the politicians, he remarked: “It is not my experience that all persons in politics are rascals. They are mostly good people with compassion for the afflicted and living an untainted life. Some of them are surely bad, but what class is there in which such persons do not exist, be it the business class, the politician class or of those in Sarvodaya. The only thing wrong in the politicians is the idea that they could serve the people only through power. This cuts them off from contact with the people and they fail to serve them.”

When Dr. Sushila Nayyar, with tearful eyes, urged him for a statement against the increasing use of falsehood in the country, the eruption of violence and the danger of country’s disintegration, Vinoba first ignored the whole thing by referring to his study of the Vedas, his daily routine and other such matters, though at the end, however, he asked her not to allow her mind to get affected by things in the newspapers. If the news of communal riots reached people, it was because of the advance of science in the means of communication. If the overall percentage of the people killed was considered, it would not come to many and the remedy lay in better understanding of the religious scriptures of each other. He told another person that nonviolence predominated in the world over violence.

Vinoba, however, readily replied to questions on spirituality and sundry other non-political subjects. A few of those of general interest can only find place here. Once asked about India’s contribution in the field of *sadhana*, his first reaction was that it was a difficult question, but later he mentioned two things, not taking of beef even during famine and no attack on other countries. Dr. R.R. Diwakar used to visit Paunar and question Vinoba on diverse topics. Once he referred to the prevalence of illiteracy in the country and asked Vinoba for the method to remove it. Vinoba said: “We

have nothing to fear from illiterates in India. The only possible source of trouble are the literates. The literate gentry of today has gone astray. The foremost question today is how to bring it on the right path." The other question was: "These days the emphasis of Gandhian constructive workers is on the Economic Man. Gandhiji's emphasis was on the Ethical Man, and of Aurobindo on the Spiritual Man. You too seem to be laying emphasis on the Economic Man and providing a structure for him by Gramdan and Gram Swaraj. How can it bring in ethics in its wake?" Vinoba observed: "The principal emphasis in Gram Swaraj is on the ethical and the spiritual, since the movement aims at the ethical and spiritual regeneration of man. To achieve it, it is also necessary to change the economic order radically, which may be brought about by legislation and coercion. We have however, substituted the method of persuasion in place of coercion."

There were occasions when Vinoba addressed gatherings and the ideas expressed on those occasions also deserve mention. He said on his birth-day in 1971 repeating in essence what he had said ten years back: "There is no doubt that now I want nothing more from life. My task is done. And yet, since the physical entity remains I continue to put it to whatever use it can be put to. The consciousness that no duty remains unfulfilled frees my mind of all worries. In is another matter that it continues to think."

On another occasion, he said about a revolution: "There are certain things to 'be done' and some others that 'happen'. While a revolution in individual life is 'brought about' or 'done', a social revolution 'happens'. It is like the springing forth of happiness at the sight of a child." And he added: "A social revolution is similarly a bursting out of a total cumulative effect of individual purity and discipline leading to the emergence of a new set of values in life, which, in turn, influences others to change their way of life. . . . That is why I say that a social revolution is only of secondary importance, while individual revolution is of primary significance. A social

revolution takes place in the fullness of time when individuals are ready for a take-off.”

Once he cited with approval of Madhavadeva, a renowned saint of Assam, who had divided men in four groups. The first is of the depraved who see nothing but evils in others. The next higher was of those who saw both good and bad points in others. The third group was of those who see only good in others, and Madhavadeva characterised them ‘good’. But the highest category was of those who say good in a magnified form. And Vinoba then added that Gandhi magnified his (Vinoba’s) small good points hundred times and presented them as such before the people.

An important event of this period was the successful nuclear explosion by India, which had been differently reacted by Indians as well. Vinoba was among those who welcomed it. He had faith in the government assurances that nuclear power would only be used by it for peaceful purposes, and not for making nuclear weapons. He allayed the fears of the anti-nuclear lobby by pointing out that the invention of fire was also suspected in the beginning. He said that any power could be misused, and it was for spirituality to decide what was use and what was abuse. The explosion denoted to him an advance of science which he favoured. He asked the members of Acharyakul, which he was then addressing and among whom some had been alarmed at the explosion, to examine the question from all angles and then to arrive at a decision and make it public.

Another event of this period was the collection of a fund to be presented to Vinoba on the attainment of the age of seventy-five in 1970. It was called Gram Swaraj Fund, and Vinoba had permitted its collection on the condition that the amount collected under it would not go to any permanent deposit account. The sum was actually presented to him by Jayaprakash Narayan on the Gandhi Jayanti Day that year. The collection by then had come to Rs.62,56,285.00. The time limit for it was further extended till the year end and the



final amount collected was Rs.75,19,750.13. On Vinoba's advice the amount was utilised for Gramdan.

On the presentation of the fund to him, Vinoba had expressed his satisfaction at the amount collected. He said that though in terms of the purchasing power of the rupee it could stand in no comparison to some other well known funds like the Tilak Swarajya Fund, the collection drive in this case could be deemed successful in that in near past a purse had been collected for presentation to the Frontier Gandhi and then it was a time when Baba's own prestige was at its nadir.

A third event of importance was Vinoba's programme of *upavasadan*, donation of money saved by fast, in September, 1973, to finance the recurring expenditure of the Sarva Seva Sangh. Under it a person was to keep one day fast every month and to donate the sum saved thereby to the Sarva Sena Sangh. The scheme was highly appreciated on ethical grounds, but it did not make much progress because it needed very sustained effort and before long differences cropped up in the Serva Seva Sangh and amongst Sarvodaya workers on the issue of Bihar movement. Vinoba diverted then his personal *upavasadan* from Serva Seva Sangh to Gitai work in April 1975, showing thereby something like his break with the sangh.

## *Different Approaches in Sarvodaya*

IT IS NOT unnatural for differences in approach to crop up in any movement when it does not appear to be achieving its objective. They also get intensified if some alternative programme and leadership is in sight. It had happened in the twenties and the thirties in the Gandhi era. If it did not assume serious dimensions then, the cause lay in the twenties in the compromising attitude of Gandhi towards the Swarajists, and in the thirties it was a feeling in an overwhelming majority of workers and leaders that there was no option to a nonviolent movement and for that the leadership of Gandhi was indispensable. Gandhi had even left the Congress then to devote himself to constructive work, but before long the leaders turned to him for advice and the same happened in 1940 during the war.

The history of the Sarvodaya movement in India during the life of Vinoba is divisible into three parts. The first period of the fifties was a period when the movement was going from success to success and assuming the form of a people's movement, when there was all admiration for Vinoba and his leadership was unquestioned. It was then purely a constructive workers' movement shunning power politics altogether, and JP, to use henceforth the more popular name of Jayaprakash Narayan, had been attracted towards it after he realised the futility of power politics to ameliorate the lot

of the common people or to usher in a new society, and though he never regarded himself to be either the disciple of Gandhi or Vinoba, his loyalty to Vinoba was full and total.

Then came the sixties with the movement experiencing a lean period, and the land target of fifty million acres to be achieved by 1957, realised only to the extent of some nine per cent. This had led some second line leaders to examine the movement's strategy, and in this they were influenced by the views of foreign pacifists, sympathetic to the cause but with no such attachment for Vinoba as characterised the Indian Sarvodayites. They had found in him that lack of organisational ability which had distinguished Gandhi, and they faulted him also for its non-use in the movement of nonviolent resistance or 'satyagraha' which they looked upon as the greatest gift of Gandhi. But since this criticism of theirs had no impact on the top Sarvodaya leaders, it did not carry much weight then. However, this had not precluded two top leaders from thinking of other programmes to enthuse the workers. It was then, as mentioned in an earlier chapter, that JP's mind turned towards making a success of the newly government, launched experiment of democratic decentralisation and that of Dhirendra Mazumdar's scheme of Gram Bharati. Vinoba, however, persisted in following his old line, and before long these two also reverted to the mainstream.

Then followed the Storm Campaign of Bihar when they all joined together to make a success of it. No doubt, a few voices were raised then expressing doubts at the wisdom of getting pledges for more and more Gramdans without consolidating them, but they were drowned in the general acclaim since JP agreed with Vinoba. However, the slow pace of Gramdan consolidation work taken up after the Rajgir Sammelan, started a process of disappointment not only in second line leaders but also in some top leaders, the former giving expression to it first and the latter doing so after some more consideration. Again there was an

examination of the strategy of the movement, leading to doubts amongst workers whether the old line still advocated by Vinoba should be adhered to with greater dedication or some new elements be introduced in it to make it more effective in the light of the objective of developing the people's power on which they were all one, and to impart thereby a momentum to the movement.

One need not deal here with all that transpired at various meetings and conferences, except to point out that with each of them the doubts came increasingly to the fore and they were intensified into differences. The revisionists were in a minority in the beginning, but as time passed and the efforts to speed up the consolidation work in Bihar failed to show tangible results, they went on gaining new adherents and ultimately had an overwhelming majority of workers on their side. The points of differences mainly centred around two issues, namely, the place of nonviolent resistance or satyagraha in the movement and the attitude towards politics. The non-changers naturally looked to Vinoba for guidance, while the changers looked to JP for their leadership.

Before taking up the two issues, it would be better to deal with these two personalities who by the beginning of the seventies had come to furrow two different lines in the Sarvodaya movement. It may, however, be clarified at the very outset that this difference of lines had not at all affected their personal relationship, convinced as they were of each other's unquestionable sincerity, though it is difficult to claim it about the second line leaders. Vinoba's approach was basically spiritual. He regarded himself an instrument in the hands of God and believed in doing his best, leaving the fruits to Him. They were, no doubt the touchstones on which the correctness of the methods could be tested, but, after all, they were beyond the control of human beings. In any case, his one test, and a supreme one, was if those efforts had personally advanced him spiritually, and if so, he must keep patience and persist with them. There was no dejection for

him. But it was different with JP, whose approach was primarily societal, as he himself had once said. With him results counted much more and there was a limit to his patience. That accounted also for his big stride from Marxism to Sarvodaya via democratic socialism. As he says in his *Prison Diary*: "I had been bitten by the bug of revolution during my high school days. It was then the bug of national revolution, national independence. . . . The revolutionary bug took me to Marxism and through the national movement to democratic socialism and then to Vinobaji's nonviolent revolution through love. . . . Such being my ancient occupation with revolution and having become satisfied that the Gram Swaraj movement was not capable of bringing about nonviolent revolution. . . . I was searching for some other way." And this search took him away from Vinoba, not in all matters but in two vital ones which were of not keeping aloof from politics and the use of satyagraha, including *gherao* (encircling a person and not allowing him to move or work) and *bandh* (stoppage of business and of the movement of vehicles including railways).

This was not surprising. JP was originally a man of political field, and on joining Sarvodaya he had only renounced power politics and not his interest in politics. His criticism of India's role in the United Nations Organization (UNO) on the issue of Hungary in 1956, his denunciation of the Government of India's policy on the Chinese occupation of Tibet in 1959, his interest in the problems of Kashmir and Nagaland, all testify that he was a Sarvodaya leader with a difference and with an outstanding personality of his own. His role in all these matters was even appreciated in Sarvodaya circles. With the worsening of conditions in the country at the end of the sixties and in the early seventies, his attention got more and more concentrated on the domestic situation which was characterised by problems of massive unemployment, accelerating inflation, failure of the green revolution, poverty of the people and increasing moral deterioration at all levels. JP held Prime Minister Smt. Indira Gandhi primarily

responsible for it. He read in her a tendency towards increasing concentration of power in her own hands, abridgement of the fundamental rights of the people granted under the Constitution by its amendment, and attack on the independence of the judiciary observed in the appointment of the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, overriding the seniority of several judges. JP suspected the hands of Russia in all these. Reminiscing on it later in jail, he wrote in *Prison Diary* that "I had always believed that Mrs. Gandhi has no faith in democracy, that she was by inclination and conviction a dictator" and that "Russia has backed Mrs. Gandhi to the hilt. Because, the further Mrs. Gandhi advances on her present course, the more powerful an influence will Russia have over this country. A time may come when having squeezed the juice out of Mrs Gandhi, the Russians through the CPI (Communist Party of India) and their Trojan horses within the Congress will dump her on the garbage heap of history and instal in her place their own man." Thus JP's mounting opposition to Mrs. Gandhi was based on the two grounds of her tendency towards dictatorship which could lead to the destruction of democracy in the country and the fears of a communist take-over.

Vinoba, on the other hand, had no bias against Russia or communism, and it is highly doubtful if he shared JP's perception about Indira Gandhi, and even if he might have done so to some extent, he also knew her great qualities, including her patriotism, her sympathy for the underdog and her moral and physical courage not to be cowed down by anybody, and he also knew well that confrontation with her would not bear the desired fruits. Vinoba was as keen as JP to bring the affairs on the right track, but he had faith in his gentle methods to win friends and influence people, while JP had lost all faith in her conversion and saw no alternative to ousting her from power. JP had probably been influenced in this matter by the ideas and perception of those intellectuals with whom the Sangh members had come to associate in order to widen the base of the movement. The first such

formal meet had been held at Bangalore in July 1972 and the second one of a National Conference was convened by the Sarva Seva Sangh at Sevagram in September 1973.

At Bangalore, a small group of leading Sarvodaya workers and some sympathetic social scientists had met to discuss ways to broaden the movement and to make it more effective. Some of the ideas discussed were related to Gramdan work but most of them dealt with political matters. The latter included, besides voters' education and people's candidates which already formed part of the Sarvodaya agenda, active promotion of electoral reforms, bringing together of all Gandhians despite their different approaches to political power, convening a conference of political leaders and encouraging Gandhians and their sympathisers in Parliament to act together informally to promote the aims of the movement. It also suggested launching of a new journal of political commentary which later materialised as *Everyman's Weekly*, published from New Delhi. And what was still more important was JP's call to Sarvodaya workers to return to the mainstream of India's political life. This emphasis on political matters had been objected to by some Sarvodaya leaders attending the conference.

Before the National Conference of September 1973, a meeting of the Sangh executive had been held in July. It had passed a resolution on the national situation which gave an inkling of the tendency towards increasing politicalisation in the movement. It had expressed serious concern over famine, poverty, unemployment, inflation, atmosphere of panic created by the bureaucracy, especially the police, the feeling of the violation of the constitutional directives, particularly the one about prohibition, violation of constitutional provisions such as the imposition of the President's rule in the States, increasing concentration of power and widespread corruption. It was highly critical of the Government's take-over of the wholesale trade of grains for it gave rise to such evils as black-marketing, corruption, infringement of

citizens' liberty, etc. The language of the resolution indicated involvement of the Sangh with a wide range of problems, at variance with its earlier stands. It chiefly blamed the Government for all problems, and there was even a strong suggestion that people should exert their power through nonviolent action.

However, the action plan approved at the National Conference in September made no departure from the previous ideas except in so far that it approved of satyagraha against societal evils for mobilizing the poor against bribery. As far as the use of nonviolent direct action was concerned, Vinoba was getting reconciled to it. He had said: "I have already reconciled myself to the idea of satyagraha provided it has the sanction of the consensus. What is uppermost in my mind is to prevent our workers from being divided. Nemesis will overtake them if they get divided on the question of satyagraha." But he differed from Acharya J.B. Kripalani who had blamed the apolitical approach of the Sarvodaya movement for impeding the growth of people's power and had argued that Gandhi's approach was an integrated one, with equal interest in politics and constructive programme. Kripalani was for resistance to evil for developing people's power. When the delegates visited Vinoba at Paunar, he said to them: "Dada Kripalani says that we should develop political strength to restrain the government from going the wrong way and bending it to the service of the people. Badshah Khan also on coming to India chided us for keeping away from politics. Why this 'common sense' did not dawn on me? Because I am convinced that there is only one royal road to the solution of many problems. It is the solution of the land problem. This was neglected by those followers of Gandhi who went over to politics, leaving the people with centuries old problems." And then he pointed out that he took up the cause of the landless whose problem haunted the whole of Asia, and the movement could distribute ten lakh acres of land and inspire 5,000 workers with moral values. Referring to the National



Conference and to the Sangh session held after it, he said that corruption was rampant everywhere because it was inbuilt in the system. The Sarva Seva Sangh too could not claim to be free of it. It had raised money from time to time, including from those who earned black money. That was why he had been insisting on dependence on the people and suggesting *sarvodaya-patra*, *sampattidan*, *gramkosh* etc., the last being *upavasadan*.

At the Sangh session, the secretary had pleaded for "politicalisation" of Sarvodaya, but he found himself in a minority. This situation, however, did not last even a year, when JP in search of youth power to bring about societal change, welcomed the Gujarat movement and later when Bihar followed the Gujarat example, he accepted the leadership of the movement started there. JP had done it in his individual capacity, but some other Sarvodaya leaders agreeing with him had also associated themselves with it. They even wanted to involve the Sarvodaya movement in it. It would have been better if before accepting the leadership of the Bihar movement, JP had at least consulted Vinoba. He probably did not consider it necessary. It was an old habit of his to present his colleagues sometimes with his decisions as *fait accompli*. The same happened this time as well, but some of his Sarvodaya colleagues were not prepared to yield to him on principles. JP, in his wishful thinking, even failed to gauge Vinoba's opposition to his politicalisation of the movement.

However, Vinoba did his best to accommodate JP's action. When the Sarva Seva Sangh session which was held at Wardha in July 1947, failed to arrive at a consensus concerning its involvement in the Bihar movement, he devised a compromise. But before dealing with it, it is better to take up Vinoba's attitude towards that movement. Even before the birth of that movement, Vinoba had observed to Siddharaj Dhadda, a very senior Sarvodaya leader: "I know there are numerous causes for the people to be dissatisfied. The

country is faced with many problems and the situation is deteriorating everyday. But violence is no solution to these problems and under no circumstances it should be encouraged . . . . under the present circumstances, even a nonviolent movement against the government should not be started. As long as India, Pakistan and Bangladesh are not able to sort out their differences and until a complete reconciliation is established on the sub-continent, even a nonviolent movement against the government should not be launched. We should confine ourselves to peaceful constructive work." This idea was also reiterated later in April 1974 when he clarified his position at some length. He had then stressed again the need to preserve country's unity and had expressed his fear that any agitation against the government and an attempt to dislodge it would weaken the country, even if the agitation be a nonviolent one. It however, did not mean that the government should not be criticised or opposed. He himself had done it at the Women's Conference held earlier in March, in the very presence of Smt. Indira Gandhi but it was to be done with love and affection. He was of the view that for the various ills of the country the government alone was not responsible, and to hold it solely responsible for everything implied acceptance of the idea that the government was everything, something which ran counter to Sarvodaya thinking.

He had also no objection to their taking up a new programme to create an awareness in the people and to rouse their power by creating in them a confidence that they could solve their problems themselves. But he wanted that the unity of the movement must be maintained. Vinoba took care that persons linked with Smt. Indira Gandhi and visiting him, were not able to exploit his difference on approach with JP in any way. He held a very high opinion of JP as a person, but he was doubtful about his political wisdom regarding the Bihar agitation, and was of the view that nothing would come out of it. He probably thought so because he knew the

real strength of the Sarvodaya movement in terms of the number of workers and their capacity, and the fact that dissatisfaction against the government was one thing while acceptance of Sarvodaya values was another, and he was aware that the people were yet to accept those values.

As regards the compromise devised by him on the failure of the Wardha session of the Sangh to arrive at a consensus, it was based on adherence to the three principles of truth, nonviolence and self-restraint. It allowed freedom of action to all whether to work for Gramdan or to join the Bihar agitation. All that one had to see was that he observed the above three principles. He also advised that the movement should first be confined to Bihar for the first three or four months and extended to other parts of the country only after the success of experiment there. As regards the Sarva Seva Sangh, Vinoba did not favour its dissolution in the 25th centenary year of Lord Mahavir, the founder of Jainism.

However, chasms began to appear again before long amongst Sarvodaya workers. They were partly born of the different interpretation put on the compromise formula by the two groups and partly on the direction the Bihar agitation was taking. According to Geoffrey Ostergaard who has made a special study of the Sarvodaya movement during the seventies in his *Nonviolent Revolution in India*, the situation was a delicate one, especially calling for restraint on the part of the majority group, but that restraint was not forthcoming. And then the compromise was still more undermined by action. The office-bearers of the Sangh, notably the President and the Secretary, did not always take care to distinguish clearly between their actions as individual Lok Sevaks and their actions as the officers of the Sangh. He writes: "They were not unhappy if the public got the impression that Sarva Seva Sangh, as an organisation, was fully committed to the Bihar movement." And even more important than this lack of restraint was the course the Bihar movement was taking under the fourfold programme spelled out by JP within a few

weeks of the compromise. Under it, the struggle assumed the form of attempts to paralyse the administration, except in matters affecting the daily life of the people. They included peaceful *gherao* of the legislators' houses, *gherao* of the local administrative offices and a campaign for withholding the payment of taxes by the villagers. Later, to impart a momentum to the movement a further programme of *Janata sarkar*, people's government, was chalked out and by September it had been decided to extend the movement to other parts of the country. In the *Everyman's Weekly* of 21 September 1974, JP wrote: "The Bihar struggle is no longer a State issue. It has acquired an all-India importance and the country's fate has come to be bound up with its success or failure."

After a few months came the challenge of elections by Smt. Indira Gandhi, and JP took up the gauntlet. However, even prior to it JP's mind was working in that direction. He had said on November 8, "Our struggle will continue and finally it will all be settled at the next election." Vinoba, however, had been maintaining a low profile all along these months after the compromise, something which had even perturbed the supporters of JP who expected him to condemn the government for certain happenings in Bihar, especially the police attack on JP in a procession. Vinoba had kept silence on it because of his habit of not condemning anybody, though he had highly appreciated JP's nonviolent forbearance at the police assault. It was under such circumstances that the Sangh Executive met on 6 December, when the group opposed to the Bihar movement was in no mood to compromise and no consensus could be reached. It was then decided to send a team to meet Vinoba on 12 and 13 December at Paunar. During the discussion with him, it was clear that Vinoba disapproved of the course being taken by the Bihar movement. He reminded the team that the basis of the Sarvodaya movement and the Sangh was spirituality with its four elements of truth, nonviolence, fearlessness and non-opposition to any individual person. He also said that even if nonviolent resistance to injustice was conducive to

developing spirituality, nonviolence alone was not enough to achieve it. Manu's advice is to speak truth, but not harshly or bitterly. Lord Mahavir too did not believe in imposing his ideas on others and was prepared for discussions in terms of the opponents' beliefs. Hence Vinoba said, "I agree with Mahavir Swami and Manu. We must understand the adversary's position and try to discuss with him in his terms."

Referring to the compromise formula of July, he said to the team: "Now circumstances have changed. I don't favour elections because it makes for factions and groups, not unity. You will say that democracy is with you, and so does the other side. Both sides will say that the other is destroying democracy. This will not change the system. It will be a case of Tweedledum and Twedledee." Vinoba's opposition to participation in elections was so strong that he plainly told them that if the Sangh members worked in elections, he would leave it. However, he again suggested a compromise that those who desired to participate in elections might do so by taking temporary leave from the Sangh. The members standing for participation in elections were not favourably inclined towards its acceptance. Vinoba, however, still anxious to save the oncoming situation, decided to observe silence for a year beginning with December 25. This he probably did with the hope that circumstances would so develop during this period that some way might be found to avoid all round friction.

Vinoba's silence led some persons to try for compromise between the two groups prior to the Sarvodaya Sammelan scheduled to begin from 15 March 1975 and during its sessions, but they did not succeed. On the last day of the Sammelan, Vinoba went to the Guest House where JP was staying, broke his silence for two minutes and pleaded with him to give up the conflict with the government, while continuing the movement. He told him that since he had already displayed his strength, he should like Lord Krishna leave the battlefield. Vinoba probably wanted the ball to go into the court of Indira Gandhi and he expected that such an

action would also induce her to give up the path of confrontation. But JP could not find his way to accept it. The Sangh, however, also decided to go into silence for the duration Vinoba remained silent.

Then came the Emergency in July 1975 and JP and many others were sent to Jail. Vinoba was then only halfway through his year of silence. Soon after its declaration, Vasant Sathe the Congress M.P. from Nagpur, visited him and in a written statement Vinoba characterised the Emergency as *anushasan parva*, mistakenly understood as an era of discipline. The comment was interpreted by Sathe as implying support for the Emergency and was propagated as such. But what Vinoba really meant was that it was a period when the views of the moral leaders of society should prevail. That was made clear by Vinoba in his very first speech on 25 December 1975 on the completion of his one-year silence. He said then: "The Acharyas lay down the dictates of discipline; states lay down the dictates of the government. We should understand well the role of the Acharyas and of the state. If the world only remains under the rule of the state, there would be no rest. If it is guided by the dictates of the Acharyas, there would be peace in the world. . . . If the people behave according to the guidance of the Acharyas, it will be good for all. This is *anushasan*, the discipline of the Acharyas."

Smt. Indira Gandhi visited Vinoba at Paunar on 7 September and also participated in his birth-day function on 11 September in the capital. Speaking on that occasion, she referred to Vinoba's work for the uplift of the rural masses and promised to do something about prohibition to which Vinoba attached great importance. This promise was fulfilled on Gandhi's birth-day that year.

The 7th September visit was not the only visit of Indira Gandhi to Paunar. The first visit had taken place on 14 October 1972, and the second one in January 1974. The third one was on the occasion of the Women's Conference in March that very year. This 7th September visit was thus the

fourth one and it had been prompted by the information about Vinoba's serious illness due to pneumonia. She came with her personal physician and stayed there for the night as well, when the inmates of the Brahma Vidya Mandir had a very frank talk with her, the only condition attached to it was that things should not go out. However, I had learnt a few days later that one question put to her was about her statement which had been interpreted by the press as a countercharge of corruption against JP. She was reported to have acknowledged her mistake and at the same time pointed out that she did not repeat it.

Leaving aside a visit or two, no records have so far come into light of her talks with Vinoba, but one can well presume that Indiraji who was fond of meeting highly spiritual personalities must have been deriving some inner satisfaction from her meetings with him, and she might have also liked to hear him on the various problems that troubled her, both due to his objective approach and his sympathy for her. Despite all secrecy there are indications that Vinoba's advice had been on the side of reconciliation, restraint, alleviation of the misery of the families of those who were in detention, removal of restrictions on press and holding of elections. It is a matter of conjecture how far his advice was effective. An interesting fact may, however, be mentioned here. JP had been released on 12 November 1975, but he could only visit Paunar on 18 July 1976. He is reported to have then asked Vinoba to intercede with Indiraji for restoring democracy in the country. He had then said: "The way you put the issue facing the country will have a great effect on public opinion as also on the thinking of the government." Vinoba had then told him that if Indiraji happened to see him, he would certainly tell her all this. The details of this meeting between Vinoba and JP, combined with other incidents, show the mutual trust and regard that had continued to exist between them, despite the difference of approach on certain matters. Vinoba was the first person to initiate both the fund for the purchase of a dialyser and other instruments for JP and so

also the fund which was to be presented to him on completing the age of seventy-five, by donating one rupee to each of them.

Vinoba's year of silence was to end on 25 December 1975 and several conferences had been planned for that occasion either at Paunar or Sevagram. Vinoba broke his silence by greeting those who had assembled to celebrate the silver jubilee of the Bhoodan Movement. They numbered some 6,000 delegates and 15,000 other people. Besides clarifying the meaning of the word *anushasan*, mentioned earlier, he said that the Bhoodan-Gramdan Movement should be carried on with the co-operation of all the five forces including that of the State, the others being of the common people, social workers, intellectuals and of the moneyed class of businessmen and industrialists.

In the context of *anushasan* in the above speech, Vinoba had also said: "If the government goes against the path shown by the Acharyas, then the question of satyagraha against it would arise. But I have full confidence that the government here would do nothing against the discipline of the Acharyas." This indicated that his mind was working in the direction of calling a meeting of the Acharyas, which was actually held later at Paunar from 16 to 18 January next year. The participants selected by Shriman Narayan and approved by Vinoba numbered 26, consisting of vice-chancellors, senior professors, eminent jurists, prominent constructive workers and distinguished men of letters. In his inaugural speech Vinoba outlined the task before them which was to consider the gains and losses of the Emergency and to reach a consensus. Later their view was to be placed before Indiraji. He also made it clear then that after knowing the reaction of Indiraji on it, they would have to reconsider the matter and then their final unanimous view would be made public.

The meeting after deliberations reached a unanimous view which could be regarded as a highly balanced one, but it was made public even before its submission to Indiraji, in



violation of the procedure laid down by Vinoba. How it all came about, is not known, but it may be that because of it Indiraji did not give time to Shriman Narayan for its presentation, despite his long wait of a week in Delhi. However, she visited Vinoba on 24 March 1976. What transpired between them is not known, but Vinoba did announce in April the idea of a bigger Acharyakul conference with one Acharya from every district. It was, however, later given up, since he found that those who were fearless were not non-partisans and those who were non-partisans were not fearless.

Then came Vinoba's fast for ban on cow slaughter, which would be dealt with in the next chapter. What properly belongs to this chapter is that with the end of Vinoba's year of silence had also ended the Sarva Seva Sangh's period of silence, but due to certain circumstances it had not been able to hold any meeting of Sarvodaya workers before 30 June 1976. While addressing it at Paunar, Vinoba endorsed the suggestion of Charu Chandra Bhandari, a veteran Sarvodaya worker of Bengal, for the dissolution of the Sangh, and instead favoured informal meetings of the Sarvodaya Samaj, the original fellowship of Gandhians set up in 1948, once or twice a year to share experiences and ideas. He also wanted the State district and village Sarvodaya Mandals to continue, but to function in such a way as not to quarrel and spoil things. His ideas had the support of Dada Dharmadhikari, a top Sarvodaya leader, but no decision was taken because many Sangh members were still behind bars and it was felt that after their release the matter should be considered as a special convention. It was ultimately held in May 1977 after the Emergency was over and since JP was not favourable to dissolution, it decided against it. However, it lent its support to the cow protection work of Vinoba.

Meanwhile, Vinoba had announced on 25 September 1976 that from that day he would neither remain patron or any such thing of any institution nor would he advise any

institution even if it had been founded by him, and that he would only talk with persons in the presence of others and that too on science and spirituality. However, prior to that, he addressed the Sarvodaya Sammelan held at Paunar from 23 to 25 December, and said that though the country had many political problems, they were petty and trivial, and that "Many Kingdoms will come and go but the names of only those will survive who provide spiritual guidance to society." He asserted that what he had been saying was no small thing and he asked the workers to further develop in them feelings of truth, love and compassion. To those whose minds were occupied by petty problems of politics, he advised patience, since God helped those who kept it.

Next month in January 1977 came the sudden decision to dissolve the Lok Sabha with Emergency rules relaxed to permit legitimate political activities. In the ensuing elections, the Congress(I) was routed in northern India and the Janata Party Government was formed with Morarji Desai as the Prime Minister. Vinoba had abstained from any comment during the elections, but later when S.M. Joshi, a Janata leader, met him, he warned him against the prevailing euphoria in the country. His advice to Siddharaj Dhadra, who visited him after the elections, was to select one district in each State and to work there for self-reliant Gandhian villages. The Sangh Executive too thought somewhat on the same lines, but in the context of new JP's ideology of total revolution. Despite this difference of approach, something of a rapprochement had been effected between the Sangh and Vinoba by mid-1978. Vinoba had notified to State government that henceforth the members of the State Bhoodan Samities be nominated in consultation with the Sangh.

Vinoba wanted Mrs. Gandhi to liberate herself from politics and even asked her several times when she could be expected to follow the example of Asoka, but her mind was not prepared for it and before long she was returned to the

Lok Sabha from the Chigmagalur constituency in Karnataka in November 1977. At the year end, Morarji Desai was at Wardha where he met Vinoba and had some talk with him on cow-slaughter ban and prohibition. However, squabbles in the Janata Party led to the resignation of the Desai Government in July 1979 and ultimately Mrs. Gandhi returned to power. Meanwhile JP had died on 8 October 1979.

On the news of his death, Vinoba could not take his usual meal and he paid tribute to his character in the words of Nanak: "No one is an enemy, nor an alien." JP's ashes were spread near the Champak tree in the Paunar Ashram, where the ashes of Vinoba's closest associates are laid to rest and where the same had been done with the ashes of Prabhavatiji, JP's life partner. In this context an incident deserves mention here. During his illness, when JP was to be shifted in an Air Force plane from Bombay to Patna, the original plan was that the plane would stop at Nagpur so that he could meet Vinoba, who had agreed to leave Paunar and go to the Nagpur airport for the purpose. But someone so manipulated things that later the idea of stopping the plane at Nagpur was given up and JP was probably not even informed of it. So, when the plane reached Patna and JP was told that it was about to descend, he enquired if Nagpur had come.

What further needs to be mentioned in this chapter is that in spite of all the good personal relations existing between Vinoba and JP, differences of approach between the Sangh and Vinoba continued to exist during the last three years of his life. Not all leaders of the Sangh were enthusiastic on the issue of cow slaughter ban. Moreover, the increasing tendency of politicalisation in the Sangh had compelled Vinoba to form another Shanti Sena, whose new pledge required the Shanti Sainiks to be non-partisans, which implied, as interpreted, even abstaining from the exercise of one's franchise.

Vinoba had suggested as early as 1973 that the UNO

should have a peace army of seven lakh volunteers, and he had assured it of a supply of one lakh volunteers from India. He repeated it at the World Women Conference held at Paunar in December 1979, and as follow-up action, even set up this new organization of his. However, it was not liked by the Sangh leaders who saw in it a rival of their old organization, and one of them even went to the extent of saying that this action was "a gross violation of public morality". They failed to realise that the old organization lacking the non-partisan clause, could not serve the purpose of Vinoba.

## *The Last Concerns*

THE CONCERNS OF Vinoba during the last years of his life, besides the five subjects of his *abhidhyana* mentioned in chapter twelve, namely Brahma Vidya, Devanagari script, Acharyakul, Shanti Sena and Gram Swaraj, were Stri Shakti or Women's Power, Khadi Mission and Ban on Cow Slaughter, the term "cow" standing for the whole bovine cattle. The subject of Women's Power was intimately connected with Brahma Vidya, since whatever might have been the position of women in Vedic times, in the later period it had deteriorated in society and several types of disqualifications had come to be imposed upon them, including spiritual. It is significant that the women's Ashram established by Vinoba in his own Ashram at Paunar, was named as Brahma Vidya Mandir. The Khadi Mission can be looked upon as a part of Gram Swaraj and also a later development of the Village-oriented Khadi, which formed part of his Triple Programme enunciated at the Raipur Sarvodaya Sammelan. The concern for ban on cow slaughter was certainly new in the sense that it had not been insisted upon before. It has two aspects, economic and cultural. As an economic demand, it is an essential part of the nonviolent revolution envisaged by him along with Gandhi and indicated in the term "Gram Swaraj", while as a cultural demand, it is a spiritual activity as had been stated by Vinoba himself.

Brahma Vidya did not connote mere intellectual

knowledge or understanding of the Supreme Being, but also an all round attitude of identifying oneself with the *atma*, the in-dwelling spirit, and not with the physical body, and this identification being reflected in every action of the individual. This implied control over one's senses and treating the whole creation as a manifestation of God. Vinoba was of the view that if such an attitude develops in an individual, no power on earth would be able to suppress him or her.

He further held that mere observance of morality and disinterested performance of duty were not enough to give full satisfaction to any person. There was also an inner world as vast as the outer world whose demands could only be met by meditation and worship. To quote him: "The service of humanity and loyalty to one's self, *nij-nishtha*, will purify a person, while attachment to science will enlighten him or her, but one can become an emancipated person (*siddha*) only when there is a feeling of Divine consciousness having been awakened in his or her consciousness." This state of a *siddha* is, thus, different from that of purity and enlightenment.

It could be attained in either of the two ways. One was to start with the service of society and to move inwards and the other was to live in some special place and to devote oneself to *sadhana*, spiritual efforts, while at the same time participating in group physical work. Vinoba had the experience of both the methods and he had come to the conclusion that one's growth did not lie in shirking any work that came to him or her, but in performing it in a spirit of worship.

The second method was reflected in the daily life of the Brahma Vidya Mandir, associated with Vinoba's wish to create an awareness in women of their latent power and it would only be proper to take it up here. The Brahma Vidya Mandir is not a woman's Ashram in the sense of being, exclusively meant for them, for Vinoba, though an advocate of self-restraint, was no believer in the segregation of the two sexes at any stage of life, but in the sense that it was to be exclusively managed by them. In India there has been a hoary

tradition of Ashrams managed by men, and it was even so with those of Gandhi. Vinoba departed from this tradition to assert the spiritual equality of women with men and to provide them with an environment in which they had a full and untrammelled scope for their spiritual development. He considered the spiritual inequality imposed upon women in a male-dominated society to be their basic problem, other forms of inequalities—social, economic and political—being secondary to it. He also held that change in their social position demands that someone like a Shankaracharya would have to emerge from them, someone whose spiritual and intellectual attainments would be as high as that was his and who would be a person of high asceticism and capable of authoring and interpreting the Shastras and living accordingly.

The realization of the inferior status of women in spiritual matters in Hindu society in particular, had probably first dawned on Vinoba when once his mother had said to him: “Vinya, you talk and try to express so much of *vairagya*, dispassion. Had I been a male, I would have shown to you what *vairagya* is.” It was further reinforced when his sister was married and he felt that even if she had preferred to remain unmarried like her brothers, society would not have allowed her to do so. These experiences drove Vinoba towards attempting to do his best to remove their disabilities, and in this he must have been influenced by the ideas of Gandhi. His efforts in that direction had their beginnings in the thirties, but it remained then only a side activity till the establishment of the Brahma Vidya Mandir in 1959. However, being then deeply involved in the Bhoodan-Gramdan movement, he could not stay at Paunar to provide them personal guidance. therefore, all that he could do was to guide them through correspondence, which too stopped when during the Storm Campaign in Bihar, he entered *sookshma* and gave up writing or replying letters altogether. On return to Paunar in 1970, he picked up the thread again. He is reported

to have once said: "While young, I prepared some youths for service. Let this advance age serve sisters now. I want to spend the rest of my life in their service."

Vinoba's efforts to uplift their condition were two-pronged: changing the attitude of men towards women and changing women's attitude both towards themselves and men. On his visit to Assam, he had been greatly impressed with their power in that region and wished to see it spread throughout the whole country. Hence under his inspiration, a team of four women, two from Assam and two from other regions, undertook a 12-year trek in the whole country starting from Indore in 1967. An account of their activities in places they visited, may be taken as a part of Vinoba's experiment to create an awareness among women of their latent power.

They would explain to womenfolk at the places they stayed that it was wrong on their part to regard themselves as *abala*, weak and helpless, when, really speaking, they were *mahila*, great and strong. They also told them that marriage should not be the aim of their life, but instead should be the service of society and the realization of God. Whether one is married or not, she must be self-reliant instead of depending on men. It was within their power to mould human beings and they could thereby play an important role in society. But what was really happening was that they themselves were acting as hindrance in the development of their sex. They discriminated between sons and daughters, and made the latter cowards and prone to dependence. Despite the ratio of females being less than that of males in Indian society, dowry was in vogue. That was how this team of four women carried on their awareness campaign among women and attacked various social evils. The very fact that they were boldly moving about from place to place, served as an object lesson to women they met and talked to.

However, this *Stri-Shakti* movement was formally initiated by Vinoba only in 1973 when a women's conference was held in January that year at Paunar. It was attended by the



representative women social workers from all over the country. Its resolution on it was later endorsed at a Women's Sarvodaya Conference held in May that year. It was then decided to observe an awareness week to carry the message of women's spiritual awakening to all parts of the country by organising *padayatras* and meetings. The response to it was unexpected. Some 5,000 women participated in more than 400 *padayatras*. This led to another women's conference in March 1974 at Paunar, and it was this which had been attended by Smt. Indira Gandhi as an invitee. With the successful experience of the previous year, it decided to organize *padayatras* in every development block of the country, numbering some three thousand.

A World Women Conference was also held at Paunar from 30 December 1979 to 1 January 1980. The participants of the 12-year trek were felicitated on the occasion. Some 1300 women had attended it, out of which some 50 were from foreign countries. The motto of the conference "Women's Pilgrimage to Spiritual Freedom", conveyed the viewpoints of Gandhi and Vinoba on women's movement and distinguished it from the Lib Movement of the West. Elaborating on it, Amalprabha Das, an eminent Gandhian worker from Assam and the chairperson of the Reception Committee, said in her speech: "Vinobaji believes that peace and happiness can only be established when women get an opportunity to develop their inner power. Today the world has become aware of the various areas of women's power. Women themselves are becoming aware of it and are doing their best to emancipate themselves. But there is a power beyond physical power which can neither be observed by eyes nor measured physically, but in comparison to which all physical powers are insignificant. Without its help women cannot be emancipated in the real sense of the term."

Vinoba called this age as "an age of equality" and his emphasis on spirituality implied equal rights for them in all fields of life. In the context of the Hindu society, his concept

of spiritual equality meant women's right to *sannyasa*, renunciation of and non-attachment to earthly ties and possessions and Brahmacharya, celibacy. His ideas on women's liberation expressed on many occasions in his long career are available in a collection titled *Women's Power*.

The second concern of Vinoba was that of the Devanagari script. He stood for its adoption as a second script by all the languages of the country, without giving up their own script. He felt that if this happened, it would be easier for various linguistic groups to learn other languages of the country, all the more so since many words of Sanskrit origin are common in them. As such, he saw four advantages in the adoption of the Devanagari as a second script. First, the four languages of south India would come closer, since within a few weeks a person of the south would be able to pick up the other three languages of that region. Secondly, it would help in integrating the south with the north. Thirdly, it would also help to unify the north. Lastly, it might bring India and other Asian countries, and ultimately India and the world, closer to each other. This last hope of his was based on the phonetic nature of the Devanagari script. He did not favour the adoption of the Roman script for Indian languages because, despite some points in its favour, it had some serious defects on account of which the late George Bernard Shaw had under his will even left a part of his estate for devising a new script for the English language.

Vinoba had mooted the idea of the Devanagari script for all Indian languages as early as 1960. He had again laid stress on it in 1971 and clarified that he wanted it only as a second script. However, serious efforts in this direction began only in February 1974, when a seminar on Devanagari script was held at Paunar to popularise his ideas on it. It led to the formation of a Devanagari Lipi Parishad, which, besides holding conferences, undertakes publication of a self-teaching series of the various Asian languages in Devanagari with Hindi as its language. The languages covered up so far are

Chinese, Japanese, Sinhalese, Basha, Indonesian language, Persian and Arabic. As regards the Indian languages, there are already many such publications in the market. Vinoba's *Gita Pravachan*, is also available in different languages of the country in the Devanagari script.

The third subject of Vinoba's *nidhyasana* was Acharyakul. Vinoba believed in the Vedic saying, "Let all good thoughts come to us from the four corners of the world." All good ideas, indigenous or foreign, old or new, were thus welcome to him. But he did feel that indigenous ideas developed in the soil of the country in response to its needs had special importance, and he strongly approved of Patanjali's Yoga Sutras, which dealt with education both from the viewpoints of mental and supramental levels. He said: "It is imperative to consider education in terms of psychology, since, without it, it would never be able to make a start. But while the knowledge of psychology is essential for initial steps in education, some knowledge is also required of the supramental to underline its final stage, its goal."

According to Vinoba, a teacher must have the three qualities of love and affection for the pupils, the habit of ever-seeking knowledge and loyalty to society involving freedom from involvement in active politics. The first two need no elucidation, but the third does. Vinoba felt that these days the student mind was already too much obsessed by active politics, and the condition was bound to worsen by teachers' involvement in power politics.

The purpose of Acharyakul was not the acquisition of power by teachers, but to make them conscious of their duties and ready to fulfil them. The remedy suggested by him for their falling prestige in society was "Know thyself". He said that a person who knew himself became a new man.

With his stay in Paunar, his interest in Acharyakul led to its growth. However, in the beginning it had only a Central Committee and then came State Committees in some States,

but it never assumed the form of an effective and influential organization. The reason probably primarily lay, as Vinoba himself had once said, in that the educated had gone astray. Gandhi too had been sorely disappointed at the "hardness of the heart of the educated". Consequently, even the first Acharyakul conference was only held in November 1973. Then came the conference of the Acharyas in January 1976, mentioned in the last chapter. The second Acharyakul Conference was also held that year, and the third in October 1980. This last conference had been attended by some 900 delegates. Prior to it, an assembly had also been held at Sevagram in which some fifty intellectuals had participated. Such an assembly was also held in April 1981.

With time, the membership of Acharyakul was also thrown open to others besides teachers engaged in the task of moulding public opinion, though the membership also got restricted to those only who pledged not to even vote in elections. With the extension of membership came also the widening of its scope. Vinoba advised it in 1980 to work both for Shanti Sena and Stri-Shakti. He was then even of the view that no separate organization was needed to create an awakening among women. But later he conceded that they could have an organization of their own.

The fourth item of Vinoba's meditation was that of Shanti Sena. Some mention of it has already been made in the previous chapter. What may be added here is that the first All India Shanti Sena Conference was held in October 1981, and was attended by some 500 Shanti Sainiks, a number beyond the expectations of Vinoba. It had no youth wing, since it was not considered necessary by Vinoba. The convenor was nominated by him and he was Achyut Deshpande, whom he used to call "Mian" because of his knowledge of the *Koran*.

The last subject of Vinoba's *nidhyasana* was of Gram Swaraj. The Gramdan part of it has already been dealt with in chapter twelve. As indicated earlier, the Village-Oriented Khadi constituted another part of it which engaged Vinoba's

special attention as Khadi Mission in these later years of his life. The concept of this Mission was only new in name, the central ideas behind it were old. Vinoba had carried out several experiments in the Khadi field, especially in spinning, in the pre-independence period. In the eyes of its workers in general, due to the special circumstances of the times, Khadi was then more a commercial measure related to the alleviation of the poverty of the rural masses than to the ushering in of a nonviolent society. Gandhi had both in his mind, and as Independence seemed to come closer, he was anxious to re-orientate Khadi in the light of the second purpose. To Vinoba as well, Khadi was not a mere cloth, but a way of life and an instrument of societal change. Hence he wanted Khadi workers not to look to the government for support but to make it stand on its own legs with the support of the people. That was the view that he had even expressed at the Constructive Workers Conference held at Sevagram in March 1948.

Despite it all, the Khadi institutions were losing their *elan vital* and becoming commercial houses, looking to the government for financial support. That was why that though the production of Khadi continued to go up after the formation of the Khadi and Village Industries Commission, the real spirit of Khadi went on declining and the programme had no impact on the rural scene, if considered in the light of Gandhi's thinking. Vinoba had been drawing attention of Khadi workers to it, whenever he got opportunities for it. He had said in 1959: "The Khadi work going on at present is like a preparatory rite performed before death. I call the government aid 'oxygen'." And there were several occasions in the sixties when he emphasized the underlying spirit of Khadi and the objective for which those engaged in it must work. In an earlier chapter we have already referred to his speeches at the Khadi Workers Conference at Nabagram in Bengal, at the Raipur Sarvodaya Sammelan and during the Storm Campaign in Bihar.

In addition to exhorting the workers to re-orientate themselves, Vinoba was also asking the Khadi Commission to transform itself into a 'Khadi Mission', but it had no impact upon it. It was slightly different with workers, especially with those who had worked with Gandhi and were heading the Khadi and village industries institutions in various parts of the country. They showed willingness to change themselves, but didn't know how to do it. So they met Vinoba in January 1981, who suggested to them to hold a meeting of all those who were engaged in Khadi work to generate the Khadi spirit. But then the question arose as to who should call that meeting, and ultimately it was convened by Vinoba himself in September that year. Inaugurating it, he asked the Khadi workers to form a Khadi Mission and gave them some guidelines for it. Its formation and the names of its first members were announced on Gandhi's birthday next month.

The word 'Khadi' used above included other village industries as well, and as such the term 'Khadi Mission' stood for "Khadi Gramodyog Mission". It is a fraternity of all Khadi and village industries workers, including artisans, and it serves as a forum for all institutions in the field. The guidelines given by Vinoba included the following:

1. Integrate science with spirituality.
2. Be fearless, without malice and non-partisan. Do not enter politics.
3. Join Acharyakul, build up Shanti Sena and work for Gram Swaraj.
4. Kakasaheb gave the *mantra* "A-sarkari asarkari", non-government is effective. Work, keeping it in view.
5. Khadi workers should meet from time to time. They might either meet at Paunar or at Sevagram once a year.

However such a meeting called "Khadi Sabha" could not be held again in his life-time after its formation. The next

meeting was held at Paunar in February 1983, three months after he had passed away.

What remains now to be dealt with as the last topic of this chapter, is his concern for the cow, leading to his demand for a total ban on the slaughter of the whole bovine cattle. Addressing some eminent constructive workers on 16 April 1976, he observed: "The cow is the base of economic planning and development in India. It gives us wholesome milk, useful bullocks for agriculture, manure to enrich the fields, Gobar gas for supplying valuable energy to the countryside, and bones and skins for rural industries after its death. We cannot find a more useful animal in the country than the cow. It must be saved from slaughter in the vital interests of national economy." Next month in a conversation with the Maharashtra Chief Minister, he again laid stress on the importance of the cow and indicated that if the ban on its slaughter was not soon imposed, he would have to fast for it. On 29 May, he issued a statement giving 11 September, his birthday, as the last date for the ban, failing which he was to undertake a fast unto death.

On 2 June, while talking to some fellow workers, he told them that 1976 was the birth centenary year of his mother, who had taught him to first water the Tulsi plant, then to feed the cow and to take his meals only after that. She also wanted him to do something for the cow, saying that it would be very good for the country if it could be saved. Vinoba said that though his mother was dead, it would certainly be of immense benefit to the country if he could save the cow. If he was able to do it, well and good. If not, he would die happily with the name of God on his lips. Addressing a meeting of the Krishi Goseva Sangh on 13 June, he made it very clear that his demand was not inspired by any narrow religious motive, and he justified it on four grounds, namely, the cultural heritage of India, it being a part of the Directive Principles of State Policy in the Constitution, it being the symbol of the party in power and its importance in the rural economy.

The copies of the *Maitri* issue publishing this statement were seized by the police though they were returned later. Except for a few periodicals prepared to defy the government, none others dared publish that statement.

Before, however, narrating the later events, it would be pertinent to deal with Vinoba's ideas on cow protection and the circumstances forcing him to think of the extreme step of a fast unto death for the ban, if required. According to him, there were three perspectives from which the cow could be viewed. One was the traditional perspective of veneration for the cow which because of its unenlightened nature has led to its neglect. The second was the scientific Western perspective according to which the cow can only be reared if it is economically useful. The third perspective, which was his, was of Indian socialism. Explaining it, he had once said: "Western socialism asks for a full and equal protection to all human beings, but there it stops. We in India have gone a step further and included the cow as a member of the family. True, we have not fully acted upon it. We merely revere the cow but do not look after it in the manner of the West. Nevertheless, we do have a deep regard for it and consider it worthy of our care and protection like human members of the family. We do not drive family members out later when they get old. Similarly, while we make full use of the cow and the bullock . . . we do not kill them." He, however, wanted this perspective to be combined with the scientific one by opening good dairy farms and pinjrapoles. He was convinced that the preservation of the cow was economically viable.

In this context, it would be relevant to point out that Dr Satish C. Dasgupta had in his study, *The Cow in India*, published in 1945, torpedoed many misconceptions prevailing among the educated in India. He had refuted the idea that India's cattle was a burden on its land and a drag on its economic development. He had proved the superiority of the bullock over the engine for ploughing and established the inter-dependence between the cattle and other animals and



between nature and man. Lastly, he had also shown the superiority of the cow over the buffalo.

Vinoba knew like Gandhi, that the cow could only be saved with the help of the enlightened co-operation of the people, and he was never tired of laying stress upon it. But since the ban on the slaughter of cows, calves and bullocks had been included in the Constitution as a Directive Principle of State Policy, it was a constitutional pledge and the government was expected to act upon it. The government, on the contrary, seemed to be going the other way. Vinoba was highly critical of the draft of the First Five Year Plan from this point of view as well and had said: "In India you cannot think in terms of cow slaughter. The Planning Commission has not the courage to say in plain terms that all useless cattle should be done away with. And yet the various programmes included under Animal Husbandry indirectly lead to that conclusion. We must think in terms of a complete ban on the slaughter of cattle." He even added that he would even assure on behalf of the Muslims that they would not stand in the way of banning cow slaughter totally. It may be mentioned here that learned Muslims like Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad, Maulana Abdul Bari and many others were of the view that Islam does not enjoin slaughter of the cow, and on knowing of the Vinoba's decision to undertake fast unto death for the ban, several religious leaders, Christians and Muslims, had also pleaded for it.

Vinoba had been greatly surprised to know that cow killing went on in Calcutta day in and day out in violation of the laws, but no attempt was made to stop it. A Supreme Court decision of 1958 justifying the total ban on the slaughter of cows, calves and useful bullocks and opining that unless a total ban was imposed, useful bullocks would continue to be slaughtered in violation of the law, went unheeded. The net results of all this indifference for reasons best known to the governments concerned and of the desire of the Government of India to earn maximum possible foreign exchange by the

export of beef and hides, has been the high price of the bullocks, affecting adversely the poor small farmers and doing irreparable loss to the cattle wealth of the country. The two States of Bengal and Kerala with different vision of society before them as against the rural civilization envisaged by Gandhi and Vinoba, have been totally against it, and the former has even on special occasions been permitting open violations of the existing laws to please a particular section of society. Some other States too, Maharashtra in particular, had turned a blind eye to their violations. The Central Government also had been sitting over the issue and this was despite the report of the committee appointed for the purpose and its own assurances of commitments given in 1960 and 1979.

The government, however, could not be indifferent to the proposed fast of Vinoba, and the Tamil Nadu Governor, Mohanlal Sukhadia, took up the role of a mediator between the government and Vinoba, probably on the suggestion of Indiraji. The Minister of Home Affairs informed the Rajya Sabha on 3 September 1976 of the various steps that the State governments were taking towards the prevention of cow slaughter and Vinoba finding them satisfactory, announced on 8 September of his decision to give up the idea of impending fast. He attributed the near solution of the problem to the blessings of God, his mother and Gandhi, and to Indiraji.

But this success proved illusory. Vinoba's demand that all States, excepting Nagaland, should enact laws in accordance with the Supreme Court decision, was complied with by all states lacking it, with the exception of Bengal and Kerala, though the Central Government had assured Vinoba that they would also do it within a year. The efforts for it, however, continued, but without success. And after a lapse of two years, the workers not only admitted the failure of their efforts but also informed Vinoba of the worsening situation regarding cow slaughter in these two States. This compelled Vinoba to announce that if the required legislations were not

enacted by those states by the end of the year, he would begin partial fast from the New Year Day of 1979 taking only water and honey, and if this too did not work, he would go on to full fast.

By this time, it was the Janata Government which was in power at the Centre, and, even if sympathetic, its difficulty lay in the ban legislation being within State list. Therefore, the Centre could only legislate on it if the matter could be included in the Concurrent List, and this required a constitutional amendment, which could only be passed if the Congress (I) co-operated in doing so. The Janata party lacked the needed majority in the Rajya Sabha. The Congress (I) was hesitant over it. However, the impending fast was postponed for 111 days on the request of the workers who wanted more time to try for the constitutional amendment, but on their failure, the fast was begun on 22 April 1979. It was ended on 26 April on the statement of Prime Minister Morarji Desai in the Parliament assuring the required amendment of the Constitution. But before it could be done, the Janata Government had fallen.

However, the efforts for the amendment continued and so also the campaign for ban in the form of explaining the need of it to the people and urging them to give a scientific orientation to their reverence for the cow. It also included a programme of preventing cows and bullocks from being taken to Bengal, Kerala or anywhere else for slaughter. All this continues even today with a special front at Deonar Abattoir in Bombay, where a gentle form of satyagraha is being carried on ever since Vinoba gave instructions for it in January, 1982, under the guidance of Achyut Deshpande, the convenor of the All India Shanti Sena.

An incident connected with the demand for ban reflects well on the gentle nature of satyagraha conducted on the issue. Smt. Indira Gandhi came to meet Vinoba on 10 April 1982. Achyut Deshpande was asked to be present then. This created an impression that Vinoba would speak to her about

the ban, but he did nothing of the kind, though Indiraji on her own initiative informed him of the various steps her government was taking for it. Vinoba simply heard it. While departing Indiraji asked him if he would like to say anything. Vinoba simply asked her to say "Ramhari, Ramhari" when going in for sleep. When she left and someone asked Vinoba why he did not say anything about the ban or allow Achyut Desphande to speak to her, his reply was, "The Deonar Satyagraha is going on. Isn't it?"

There are some who feel that the demand for this ban was a fad of Vinoba. They even sometimes argue that Gandhi did not favour a legal ban on cow slaughter. Such criticisms are mistaken. Gandhi was not against ban; only in the particular climate of the times, he did not press for it. There was another reason for that too. The number of slaughters then can stand in no comparison with that of these days. The writer remembers to have read sometimes in the thirties that the bovine cattle slaughtered numbered some 2.5 lakhs, of which two lakhs were slaughtered to provide beef to the British soldiers posted in India. The situation today is evident from the statistics of slaughters at Deonar Abattoir alone, which are being cited here as an example. The bullocks slaughtered there in 1973-74 numbered 66,787 but in 1980-81, the number was 1,21,656. The beef exported by the country in 1973-74 was 2,000 tons, while the export in 1979-80 amounted to 42,000 tons. And all this beef was of healthy cattle for no country would like to pay for meat of weak or sick cattle. Those who are conversant with Indian conditions can well understand how easy it is here to bypass the laws. In the context of the above criticism, one may refer to what a perspective American wrote in an obituary note on Vinoba in a USA pacifist periodical *Win*: "Much of the last ten years of Vinoba's life was taken up with attempts to gain an India-wide enforcement of a ban on cow slaughter. Some saw it as an act of political senility in a country beset by massive corruption, poverty, social and religious strife. Others better appreciated its economic and scientific (even if not its

political) sense, noting that the scrawny Indian cow offers far more value in milk, fertilizer and organic fuel than it could in edible protein." And he added: "For Vinoba, however, the issue went far deeper. For the tens of millions of India's rural poor, the sale of the cow for slaughter represents the last break of the family with the land, the cashing in of the last insurance policy, the final defeat in the attempt to build an egalitarian peasant and artisan culture. Still further, cow slaughter for Vinoba represented a triumph of narrow materialistic foreign values over indigenous ones. Respect for cow 'our mother' as Vinoba was wont to say, symbolised India's respect for the natural world. The anti-cow-slaughter campaign for Vinoba contained within it a revolutionary critique of contemporary self-destructive world civilization."

There is nothing anti-secular in the demand for ban on cow slaughter. As already told, there is nothing in Islam making it obligatory for the Muslims to sacrifice the cow. On the other hand, there is evidence that its flesh was not considered to be good for health. And then all efforts are and have been made not to allow it to become a communal issue. The very fact that the convenor of the Shanti Sena and a scholar of the *Koran* was chosen by Vinoba to direct the Deonar Satyagraha, points to that. And it may surprise many to know that in the days of communal tensions in Bombay both the threatened Hindus and Muslims in the vicinity had been seeking shelter with these Satyagrahis. That speaks for itself.

## *The Passing Away*

VINOBA HAD CROSSED eighty-seven on 11 September 1982. Death had no awe for him even in his young age, and with time he had increasingly come to identify himself with the in-dwelling soul, the *atma*, which, according to the *Gita* is immortal. For the last twenty years or so, he had been feeling that he had done all that an individual could and that he had no desire left any more for any material achievement. He had said several times that after seventy a person's passport was ready. All that one needed was visa, and that could come at any time. The prescribed moment of death could not be postponed, but one could determine the manner of one's death.

By and by Vinoba's body was growing weaker and weaker. A person who had covered some fifty thousand miles or eight thousand kilometres on foot during his Bhoodan-Gramdan tour, was finding even difficulty in covering a short distance in the Ashram, but the aura around him was on the increase. There was inflammation on his legs and the electrocardiogram taken on 7 August that year had revealed some weakness of the heart. The doctors examining him from time to time had feared that he might need a pace-maker any time, and one had even been procured and kept in reserve for him. They sought his permission to implant it, but he refused. On 30 October, he showed some symptoms characteristic of

heart attack, but they subsided soon and he appeared normal. The ECG taken on 3 November did not indicate any change in his heart conditions, but on the 4th he had fever and then a heart attack next day. Vinoba was co-operative with the doctors and on the 7th the doctors were satisfied with the improvement in his condition. But he was somewhat reluctant to take any medicine, food or water both on the 6th and the 7th. However, he had agreed to take them on those days. But after 10.15 p.m. on the 8th, he refused to take anything. All attempts to persuade him to take at least medicine and water failed, including one made by Smt. Indira Gandhi who was there on the 10th.

The doctors were worried at it, for they feared damage to his kidneys, bleeding from his duodenal ulcer with intense pain in it, and the possibility of heart attack again. He was informed of the danger of his passing into coma, and the doctors wanted his permission to give him medicine for it if it happened, but he refused to accord it. However, he had been feeling weak. On the 9th, he said to Achyut Deshpande who had reached from Bombay two days earlier, "Baba feels all exhausted now." On the 14th night his condition became highly critical with blood pressure was down to 50mm, and the doctors felt that it would be all over within a few hours. But to their amazement, after an hour and a half it went up by itself to 128, his normal blood pressure, without the administration of any medicine.

On the 15th morning, he was fully conscious and peaceful. His feet were marking time with the repetition of "Ramhari, Ramhari", going on within him. Then at 9.00 his breathing slowed down and at 9.30 he breathed his last in complete peace, without any movement of head, dilation of eyes or uttering of any sound. According to the doctors, he was fully conscious an hour and a quarter before his death. None of their fears had come true. Neither his kidneys had failed, nor was there any bleeding from the ulcer, and his cough trouble,

somewhat a life companion of his, had even subsided. All this reminded many of the famous lines of Kabir:

The Master took ten months to shape it  
 He fabricated the sheet well.  
 That sheet was used by gods, men and sages,  
 But they made it dirty by using it.  
 Kabirdas used it carefully  
 And left it unsoiled.

The day of his passing away was the blessed day of the *nirwana* of Mahavir Swami, the founder of Jainism, for whom Vinoba had special regard, and the manner of his death was one highly commended in Jainism. The Government had proposed a State funeral for him, but the Ashramites politely declined it. It would not have accorded with his thinking. The funeral pyre was lit, against the Hindu tradition, by Mahadevitai, who had been with him since 1934, and his ashes were buried in his room at the place he used to sit, in accordance with his wishes. The Government of India posthumously awarded him its highest honour of Bharat Ratna on the next Republic Day in 1983, but it too was declined by the Ashramites as they thought that Vinoba would not have favoured its acceptance.

Vinoba's death reminds one of his own ideal of *stithprajna*, the ideal of a man of steadfast wisdom described in the second chapter of the *Gita*, which Vinoba considered the ideal of *Gita* itself. Vinoba's picture of a *stithprajna* was that of a person who was ever in the state of *samadhi*, not in the sense of the highest state of *dhyanasamadhi*, a state of complete absorption in meditation when one becomes fully unconscious of the surroundings, so much so that he or she would not even feel the amputation of any part of the body, but a state of *samadhi* in which one remains fully conscious of everything going on around him, including something being done to one's body, and yet he or she is a mere witness thereof because of his or her complete identification with the



in-dwelling soul. Vinoba's death testifies how much he had risen over his physical body and what control he had acquired over it. He used to say that he believed in relinquishing his body before it relinquished him, and this was what he did.

## *As a Thinker and Harmoniser*

THE PRECEDING CHAPTERS have dealt with Vinoba's life and activities, with special emphasis on the ideas he had been expressing from time to time. Though his primarily spiritual personality is too deep to be fathomed unless one has a requisite spiritual experience, there is none who would not be impressed by the range and the depth of his ideas, and his immense efforts to build a nonviolent social order in the country.

Vinoba presents a unique combination of an Acharya and a saint. He was, in particular, a child of Shri Shankaracharya and Maharashtra saints, especially Sant Jnaneshwar, as pointed out earlier, and, at the same time, a child of the Indian Renaissance of the last century, as particularly personified in the thought and actions of Gandhi.

The 19th century in India was an age of cultural synthesis, when it produced a long line of thinkers, religious leaders and social activists, who devoted themselves to the task of an all round raising of the level of the Indian people in their own ways, with varying permutations and combinations of what seemed to them the best in various thoughts and cultures. The same is discernible in Vinoba. Consequently, in his life and thought, there is an emphasis on the synthesis of science and spirituality. Vinoba possessed a scientific temper, he had made his personal life as scientific as he could, and he

welcomed every advance in science. But he was also aware that a rudderless science poses an unprecedented danger for humankind, and hence he wanted it to be bridled by spirituality, and his concept of spirituality was not devoid of moral and social contents, recognised universally.

Vinoba's spiritual ideas had antedated his association with Gandhi, whose keen eyes had read it at his very first meeting with Vinoba. But his social ideas developed later, and they bear the impress of Gandhi's thinking. Their spiritual approach being alike, Gandhi's social thinking appealed to him, and the development of his social thought, both prior to and after Independence, is in accord with the basic ideas of Gandhi. This can be well illustrated by taking up Vinoba's ideas on satyagraha, which have even been criticised as "undoing Gandhi through a process of subtle refinement". His concept of gentle and gentler satyagraha aimed at making it more nonviolent, more capable to bringing about change of heart by assisting in right thinking. All this accorded with Gandhi's own search for nonviolent methods, the example he set in Noakhali when the problem was of changing the attitude of those who were part and parcel of this very society, and his ideas as to how he would nonviolently meet the challenge of the nuclear bomb. The question about it had been put to him by an American lady correspondent a few hours before his death and Gandhi's reply was: "I will not go underground. I will not go into shelter. I will come out in the open and let the pilot see that I have not a trace of ill-will against him. The pilot will not see our faces from his great height, I know. But the longing in our hearts—that he will not come to harm—would reach up to him and his eyes would be opened."

And then neither Vinoba claimed that he literally followed Gandhi, nor Gandhi ever sought it of his followers. At the 1948 March Sevagram Constructive Workers Conference, Vinoba had said: "Gandhiji gave me freely, but I also received from others. Whereever and whatever I got, I made my own. It

now forms part of my capital. I do not have separate accounts as to what part of it was derived from Gandhiji and what from others. Of the ideas I read and heard, whatever appealed to me and were imbibed by me, became my own. Hence I am a man of my own ideas." He further clarified in 1949: "Some have begun to look upon me as a representative of Gandhiji's ideas. . . . But there can be no greater mistake than this. It is true that so far my life has been spent in carrying out those experiments of Gandhiji which appealed to me, but this proviso 'which appealed to me' was always there. I gained from his association and ideas and accepted whatever seemed correct to me, leaving out others." Thus Vinoba's development of Gandhi's ideas has been in accord with his own genius and understanding.

As already remarked in the *Introduction*, Vinoba was a universal man, a *vishwa manush* in the words of the *Rigveda*. Though he had never been outside the country and hardly read newspapers, he had an intuitive grasp of the world conditions and trends, and his thinking was global. He had, with time, come to look more and more on the problems of this country in the context of the world problems, and he always acted on his maxim, *seva vyakti ki, bhakti samaj ki*, which implies that the individuals only could be served but the service must be done keeping in mind the good of society, i.e., the good of the humanity as a whole. Gandhi's services to the country had conformed to this dictum, and so had Vinoba's. He also held, like Gandhi, that his search for nonviolence in India was bound to prove of world significance. The problem of the landless peasants which he had raised was a problem shared by many thickly populated countries of the South-East Asia, and it had a world importance. It is testified by the fact that Gen. MacArthur's government in Japan after its defeat in the Second World War, took the step of conferring the proprietorship of lands on their actual tillers.

Vinoba's thinking reflected the world's best trends in his

optimistic world-view, ethical conception of civilization, opposition to the market-oriented way of life, exploitation of others, over organization and control of public life, loss of individual freedom and aggressive nationalism. Many of the best minds of the world like Albert Schweitzer, Bertrand Russell, Arnold Toynbee, Ivan Illich and some others have more or less arrived independently at the same conclusions. When Bertrand Russell regarded Vinoba as symbolising the "conscience of the world in human affairs", he might also have had in mind the trend of his thinking besides the fact of his being on a very high moral and spiritual level.

Vinoba's outstanding and major services to this country, and through it to the world, have been threefold. First, he clarified many ideas of Gandhi, which were being misunderstood or misinterpreted, and, at places, he developed them taking into account the changed conditions of India in particular and of the world in general. There is no aspect of Gandhian thought which remained untouched by him, be it the ethical discipline, the nonviolent interpretation of history, the concept of revolution, the various principles governing a nonviolent, social, economic and political order, ideas on constructive work including those regarding constructive workers, education, planning or satyagraha. Appendix B has spelled out this contribution in some details.

Secondly, he kept the Gandhian thought alive in post-independent India, when the general tendency was to forget it as if its relevance was confined only to the freedom struggle. And he did it creatively, enhancing its relevance in the eyes of the world.

Lastly, he picked up the thread of nation-building from where Gandhi had left it by his death. His efforts to build up a nonviolent social, economic and political order in the country by starting its process with the Bhoodan movement, elicited for him both national and international admiration and praise. We have already cited elsewhere Louis Fischer

who had characterised it "as the most creative thought coming from the East". True, the movement's achievements stood in no comparison to its targets, but they were not negligible if examined in the light of the national efforts put in for them. Moreover, the Movement brought into focus a neglected problem of the landless which the politicians had neither the imagination to realize nor the courage to take up in right earnest after they became aware of it.

The movement had given rise to the hope of a moral regeneration in the country, as pointed out by Chester Bowles (vide chapter eight). But it does not seem to have happened. Why it has been so, needs an explanation. The first reason, as it appears to the author, is that the movement had to contend against the rising trend in the world towards materialism and amorality, with its impact on Indian society characterised by scarcity and poverty. Secondly, the workers, in general, did not approach the people for land-gifts in the way Vinoba wanted them to do, by explaining to them the new values implied in the Movement. They looked upon it as a time-consuming process without corresponding results. Hence their preference was for short cuts to acquire land-gifts, missing the inculcation of new values among the people. Thirdly, there is a limit to spiritual and moral development in society unless the general conditions undergo favourable changes. We notice the truth of it in physical matters like the growth of hair or increase in height, and the same is true of morality. Lastly, a moral uplift needs a longer period of sustained efforts than a decade or two. However, no effort really goes in vain, and the movement in one form or another, can be expected to rise again after its period of hibernation is over.

To end, there is much in the personal life of Vinoba to inspire all of this or the coming generations to transform their own lives and to restructure society. His own life, as mentioned earlier, was highly scientific with full control over himself, and his social efforts were motivated by a pure sense of duty with no ulterior motive and ego involved. A

believer in the oneness of the whole creation, all his efforts were directed towards the joining of hearts, and he was against all divisive forces, be they the politics of power, sectarianism or any other. In this context it may be mentioned that he had taken special pains to extract essence of the scriptures of the various important faiths, as mentioned in the Appendix A, to bring about a better understanding amongst the people of other religions. In all he was responding to a pressing demand of this age.

Vinoba looked upon Gandhi as an idea and not as a person, and one can easily presume that he must have liked to be treated similarly. Hence, if some sitting on his shoulders and thus looking far ahead, continue to work for individual and societal transformations, they can well expect his blessings in their work in the manner he felt he had of Gandhi.





## Appendix A

### *Vinoba as a Man of Letters: His Books*

VINOBA ATTACHED FAR greater importance to the spiritual teachers of society than to its political leaders. While working among the Meos near Delhi in 1948, he once asked them if they knew Akbar the Great. The reply was that they knew *Allah-o-Akbar*, but they were however, familiar with the name of Kabir, showing thereby that it were the spiritual teachers of humankind which counted with them and not the political leaders, no matter how eminent they be. In consonance with this view, he once questioned Pandit Nehru if Tulsidas was born in the age of Akbar or *vice versa*. Nehru who had in a book mentioned Tulsidas as belonging to the age of Akbar, could only say that he had followed the prevailing practice.

Vinoba had also his own ideas what good literature is. According to him, such literature is for all, attracts all and people like keeping it. The Sanskrit word *Sahitya* used for literature expresses it well. Secondly, a piece of good literature is open to several interpretations, and it is this quality which imparts it, its abiding character. Not only different persons interpret it differently, but the same person can read different meanings in it at different times. Thirdly, it is characterised by a deep sense of humility. The sense of "I-ness" acts as an impediment to an artistic creation. A literary artist has to forget himself and to become objective

like a thermometer. He has to be like an umpire watching the play going on around him, with deep interest but without any bias. Lastly, a good literature must observe truth and nonviolence. A classical example of the observance of truth is provided by Vyas, the author of the *Mahabharat* who describes his own birth and that of some other members of the Hastinapur royal family with all frankness and objectivity. Adherence to nonviolence implies that the literature should only suggest and not impose its ideas on others, a quality found in Valmiki's *Ramayana*.

However, Vinoba did not consider himself to be a litterateur, though he felt that his works would find a place in literature and read for his view of life, reflecting his goodwill for all. Below is a classified list of his basic books, which have been mostly translated in several Indian languages, except those which are in verse.

#### I Books Written by Him

1. *Abhang Vratn*. A rendering in Marathi verse of Gandhi's prose book. *Mangal Prabhat* which deals with his eleven vows and is titled in English as *From Yeravda Mandir*.
2. *Gitadhyaya Sangati*. It gives the correlation between the various chapters of the *Gita* and was written at the suggestion of Gandhi.
3. *Gitai*. A simple rendering in Marathi verse of the *Gita* as desired by his mother.
4. *Gitai—Chintanika*. Jottings on his own book *Gitai*, explaining sublime points implied in it.
5. *Gitai Kosh*. A lexicon of the words in *Gitai*.
6. *Ishavasyavritti*. A commentary in the traditional style of *Ishavasyoupanishad* written on Gandhi's suggestion.
7. *Samyasutra* and *Samyasutravritti*. They explain the *Gita* in *sutra* or aphorisms.
8. *Vicharpothi*. Random thoughts jotted down from

time to time in the twenties. Also available in English translation as *Random Reflections*.

II *Books prepared from his writings in periodicals, edited by him or his colleagues.*

1. *Madhukar*.
2. *Jivanadrishiti*.
3. *Ramanama Ek Chintan*. A critical study of Gandhi's book *Ramanama*.
4. *Santacha Prasad*. It contains his explanatory notes in Marathi on some of the poems of Sant Tukaram, a famous saint of Maharashtra.
5. *Upanishadancha Abhyasa*.

III *Books prepared from his discourses in jails.*

1. *Gita-Pravachan*. A well-known discourse on the Gita available in its English translation as *Talks on the Gita*.
2. *Stithprajna-Darshan*. They are lectures on the last eighteen verses of the second chapter of the Gita the book is available in English translation as *The Steadfast Wisdom*.
3. *Swarajya-Shastra*. It gives an outline of a non-violent political order and is available in English under the same name.

IV *Books prepared by colleagues from speeches delivered during the Bhoodan-Gramdan tour.*

1. *Acharyakul*. A summarised version of it is available in English in *Third Power*.
2. *Adhyatma-Tattva-Sudha*.
3. *Atmajnana Aur Vijnana*. A part of it is available in English translation as *Spirituality and Science*.
4. *Ashram-Digdarshan*.
5. *Bhagwat Dharma Sar*. It is based on the Oriya book of Jagannathdas, named *Bhagwat*.
6. *Bhoodan—Ganga* in eight volumes, selected and edited by Nirmala Deshpande.

7. *Japuji*.
8. *Khadi-Vichar*. Also contains the speeches delivered mostly before the Bhoodan period.
9. *Karanta-Darshan*.
10. *Lok-Niti*. An English translation based on it is also available as *Democratic Values*.
11. *Mohabbat Ka Paigham*. It is a collection of speeches delivered in Jammu and Kashmir State.
12. *Nagar-Abhiyan*. Speeches delivered in Indore on his stay there in 1960.
13. *Prerak Patransh*. It contains inspiring portions of many letters of Vinoba, selected by his younger brother Balkoba.
14. *Prerna-Pravah*.
15. *Sapti-Shaktian*.
16. *Shanti-Sena*. It contains his ideas on Peace Brigade. It is also available in English translation under the same title.
17. *Shikshan Vichar*. Most of the matter in it is from the periodicals and speeches delivered before the birth of Bhoodan but after the death of Gandhi. It is also available in English translation as *Thoughts on Education*.
18. *Stri—Shakti*. It is also available in English translation as *Women's Power*.
19. *Suchita Se Atmadarshan*.
20. *Teesari Shakti*. Much of it is available in English as *Third Power*.
21. *Vinoba Vichar Sankalan*. It is a short collection of Vinoba's ideas on various matters and has been selected and edited by Vishwanath Tandon. A much larger version of it is available in English as *Selections from Vinoba*.

V. *Books edited by Vinoba with subject-wise arrangement.*

1. *The Essence of Christianity*.
2. *Gurubodh*. It is from the books of Shankaracharya.

3. *Manushasanam*. It is from *Manusmriti*.
4. *Namaghoshasar*. It is from the scripture of the same name written by Madhavadeva of Assam.
5. *Rigvedasar*.
6. *Ruhul Koran*. It is also available in English as *The Essence of Koran*.
7. *Tulsi Ramayana Sar*.
8. *Upanishadasar*.
9. *Vinayanjali*. It is a selection from Tulsidas' *Vinayapatrika*.
10. Five volumes dealing with the *abhangas* (verses) of the Maratha saints with explanatory commentaries on the poems of Sant Jnaneshwar and with a long editorial note on Eknath.

Besides these books giving the essence of different scriptures, some Jain scholars, at Vinoba's suggestion, also prepared an essence of Jain scriptures, titled *Samansuttam*. It may also be mentioned here that Vinoba was very adept in extracting essence from various religious books and would miss no important point. He took much trouble in preparing them.

## Appendix B

### *Vinoba's Contribution to Gandhian Thought*

VINOBA'S CONTRIBUTION TO Gandhian or Sarvodaya thought has been highly significant, as recognised by even those who are considered to have been very close to Gandhi and good interpreters of his thought. Here an attempt is being made to give in very brief his outstanding contribution.

There is no field of thought which he did not touch. To begin with ethical principles, Vinoba tried to remove a prevailing misunderstanding that nonviolence, as indicated by the construction of the world itself, was something negative. Hence he generally used the words "love and compasssion" for it, emphasizing its positive aspect. He applied the ethical principle of non-possession to institutions as well, something not absent from the mind of Gandhi but which was not enforced since he lacked an occasion for it. Vinoba laid special stress on it by showing how institutions living on permanent funds violated some Gandhian ethical tenets, and he made his movement give up reliance on such funds. He also clarified that the Gandhi's concept of trusteeship stood for the abolition of private property. This interpretation of his had even been questioned by some, but Vinoba had the support of eminent Gandhians like K.G. Mashruwala, Acharya Kripalani and Kaka Kalelkar, and also of Pyarelal, who had been a secretary of Gandhi. He also explained that the

fearlessness does not simply stand for lack of fear in one, but also of the tendency to frighten others. He removed the misconception that Swadeshi implied any narrowness of mind and behaviour. He said: "If we boycott articles giving an extreme interpretation to the moral obligation of Swadeshi, we shall prove ourselves to belong to a past world. . . . It is all right to produce our food and cloth, but to try to produce everything will be returning to a bygone age."

Vinoba could never appreciate a secularism which denounced religions, but, like Gandhi, he was a very staunch advocate of *sarva-dharma-samabhava*, equal regard for all religions, and he actively worked for it. Besides trying to get Hindu temples opened to men of other faiths as well, he carefully studied, as pointed out in the Appendix A, the scriptures of other important faiths to extract their essence for a better understanding of religions of others and one's own.

He supported Gandhi's nonviolent interpretation of history by citing examples from the cultural history of ancient India, and he defined the Gandhian concept of revolution, for which probably Gandhi had not felt any need but which Vinoba seems to have felt in view of the confusion prevalent about it in society. A revolution, according to him, implied an all round social revolution in society and he held that all such revolutions have their base in spiritual ideas. He defined it as "a change of heart, a change of values", and said: "My aim is to bring about a threefold revolution—a change in the hearts of the people, a change in their way of life and a change in social structure." But he wanted to achieve it by peaceful methods, rejecting violence, even on the pragmatic grounds of its wanting in wisdom to impose limits on itself, of bringing many more problems in its train, of lacking in capacity to strike at the root of any problem and of the inability of any evil to conquer another evil. He emphasized the sociological truth behind the principle of the purity of

means and rejected violence as it could never be a right instrument for any real and abiding change.

His process of revolution, as observed in his Bhoodan movement by JP, was dual, an appeal to intellect and reason on one hand and on the other an appeal to the hearts of individuals as well. There was in it a mass campaign of conversions to persuade people to give up wrong and harmful ideas, ways and values and to accept the correct ones. These new ideas and values were so chosen that they had a direct bearing on a major social problem and their acceptance was expected to lead to the solution of the problem and incidently to a radical change in society. Its another important feature was that a phased programme had been so contrived that even common people could move forward, by easy steps, towards a seemingly difficult goal. And this programme had a mass character, since it would have been difficult for an individual to live a moral life in the midst of immorality. At the same time, it was also so devised that moved by the new ideas and values, people could co-operate to create new institutions and forms of social life.

As regards social structure, Vinoba fully agreed with Gandhi on the desirability of the *varna* system, which he distinguished from the caste system as an organisation of society on the basis of hereditary occupational groups which takes advantage of inherited tendencies of individuals and of their upbringing in their particular family environments. He felt that some such system was necessary in an ideal society, but he outright rejected the caste system as a perversion of the *varna* system in which segregation and inequality of status had no place.

However, not all Gandhian thinkers agreed with Vinoba, or with Gandhi, on this issue. But there were no differences on the emphasis Vinoba laid on the *ashram* system, which divides life into the four stages of *brāhmachārya*, *grishastha* (the householder stage), *vanaprasthā* (the hermit stage) and



*sannyasa* (the stage of renunciation). His emphasis on *brahmacharya* has been mentioned several times earlier and what needs special mention here is his strong advocacy of the hermit stage to provide experienced social workers to society. At the same time, there was no under-rating of the householder stage, which he revered and felt that if properly observed, it paved way for a successful observance of the next two stages. He did not consider it to be a period of license for self-indulgence, but one for the purification of mind and heart and for the development of love and compassion and a training period for social service. Regarding the fourth stage, he said that it was an inner development and not something which could be adopted. He looked upon the *ashram* system as a top-pride of the Hindu view of life.

Vinoba did not have a high opinion of city culture. He held cities responsible for exploiting villages. To reinvigorate villages, he advised change in the educational system, revival of village industries and land distribution. But he did not plead for the destruction of city industries, which could continue to produce for city consumption and export. At the same time, he wanted the villages to have the power of controlling their imports, including total ban on the import of food stuffs and factory textiles.

Like Gandhi, Vinoba too stood for simple life which he defined as a life which takes into consideration the standard of living prevailing in society as a whole. He said: "Some have presumed that higher the standard of living, the greater will be happiness. But God has not so constituted a human being. One is only happy in a middle state, though it is difficult to define it. Extreme poverty leads to various sins, and so does affluence."

His attitude towards science was all favourable, but he distinguished between science and technology, and his attitude towards the latter was pragmatic. While rejecting

destructive machines altogether, he accepted the productive ones which were useful and did not adversely affect employment. He also said: "A machine helpful in one country might be harmful in another. A machine helpful in one period of time might become harmful at another. No set formula can be laid down to prejudge if a machine is harmful or helpful. We, therefore, have neither a blind infatuation for machines nor any irrational opposition to them. Capacity to serve will be the sole criterion for the acceptance or rejection of any machine."

He did not regard industrialism to be a curse. His view was that though in the beginning the new technology has resulted in the exploitation of the peoples, it has a purpose to serve in the world, which is to liberate them from unnecessary physical labour they are forced to do, and it is possible to do it if proper use is made of technology. Hence he believed that the prevailing concept of industrialism would lose its hold on the mind of the people only after its good points have been assimilated by society.

He insisted on village industries since the peasantry in India could not survive on agriculture alone, though one may also stress here their indispensability for a non violent society since it implies capacity to resist and that requires self-reliance in primary needs of life. To the objection that they were inefficient, his reply was: "We surely want efficiency, but millions cannot be starved in its name. I want full employment for all. If village industries help in it, we shall adopt them. What makes millions to starve for want of employment, does not deserve to do called 'efficiency'." The principal he laid down for a village industry was that its raw material was produced locally and local consumption of its finished product received priority.

The other economic principles advocated by him were self-sufficiency and co-operation. His concept of self-sufficiency, following that of Swadeshi, was not narrow. He had observed: "It need not be an isolating factor. I wish

people to co-operate consciously on as wide a scale as possible. Self-sufficiency enables a person to co-operate intelligently with as many groups in the world as one can. From the village republics to the world government there can be a continuous and widening sphere of intelligent co-operation in which all will help one another." What he primarily stood for was that villages were self-sufficient in their primary needs of life. He was for voluntary co-operation which he regarded to be an eternal principle of life, and favoured it in various agricultural activities like ploughing, irrigation, night watch, etc., but as regards co-operative farming, he did not feel that the country was yet ready for it, though he personally preferred it.

His political ideal was a government-free society, which did not mean a society devoid of government, with anarchy prevailing in it. He meant by it a society in which the citizens possess control over themselves and discharge their duties, eliminating the need of an outside control to the utmost. This is what he also understood by self-government. In accordance with this view of his, he called a "welfare state" and "ill-fare state", and instead wanted a welfare society. But his process for a government-free society was a gradualist one, the first step being the establishment of a "good government" and then progressively advancing towards a government-free society. His criteria for a "good government" included promotion of international brotherhood, intelligent cooperation of all elements within a nation to the best of their ability, the most extensive distribution of power, the least amount of governing, the simplest governmental machinery, the smallest organisation of defence, and spread of knowledge everywhere, a knowledge which was free in the sense that it did not have to follow any approved or established lines.

Vinoba did not deny the importance of politics, but he was certainly against a politics which created divisions amongst the people and laid too much stress on power politics to the neglect of developing the power of the people. He said: "We

do not deny the importance of politics, nor do we want to run away from it. . . . On the contrary, our politics is based on stark realism. We want to change the spirit of politics." He felt that a government coming into power on the bare majority of 51 per cent votes or even less, could not be said to represent people, and he wanted to correct that deformity. Though he conceded the superiority of democracy over other politics, he did not find the existing democracies to be satisfactory enough, since they depended on bureaucracies and their ultimate reliance was on the military. He held that the form of democracy adopted by this country was a senseless imitation of the West, and unless we adopt a form suited to our conditions, the country's troubles would not end.

Though he was ideally opposed to political parties with their narrow loyalties and ideas and regarded them as outdated in this age of science, he was not for their immediate abolition but wanted them to be reformed so that their mutual animosity was replaced by good relationship between them. He did not, however think that only organised opposition could keep the party in power on the right track. For that, he attached greater importance to the existence of a band of workers who, while keeping aloof from power politics, would stand between the rulers and the people, pointing out to both their mistakes, fostering mutual trust between them, and working for strengthening the power of the people.

His suggestion for the reform of the existing political system included a common programme of work on which all parties agreed, decision by consensus rather than by majority votes, indirect elections at all levels except at the lowest combined with political decentralization, which he termed as Gram 'Swaraj in the context of this agricultural country, but whose outlines could be suitably modified to serve the purpose of urban India as well. His concept of Gram Swaraj was based on Gandhi's concept of village

republics with some additional ideas thrown in, while outlining further his own picture of it. Its main features, as thought out by him, were settlement of the village disputes in the village itself, defence of the village by its own strength, control over village exports and imports, and self-sufficiency in the primary needs of life, food in particular. And to this he had also added provision of medical help through indigenous system of treatment, provision for the education of all children, no private ownership of land, and village cooperative shops. He considered Gram Panchayats to be India's unique contribution to social thinking.

However, all this did not mean that his outlook was parochial. He envisaged a world without walls and a world federation based on nonviolence in which all powers to serve would vest in lower institutions, the higher ones having advisory functions regarding them and commanding moral sanction based on public opinion. His attitude towards disarmament, war and pacifism have been sufficiently spelled out in various chapters, and so also his attitude towards crimes along with the events in Chambal Valley, and they need not be repeated here.

The outline picture of the society of his conception delineated above may seem utopian to many and some may even have genuine differences with him on it, but what rather matters more is if his basic approach is correct, and of this there is probably no doubt. Many ideas of Gandhi rejected by his contemporaries are being hailed today as highly relevant, and amongst the persons praising them now are also some former critics of his who are living today. In any case, the primary question is how to work for its realization. Vinoba was aware of the difficulty of the task and he preferred moving towards it patiently step by step, every step directed towards the objective. His technique, as advocated and practised by him, can be divided under the four heads of constructive work, education, planning and satyagraha. Vinoba was basically a constructive worker and an educationist. His various

constructive programmes and his ideas about that work have been dealt with in the various chapters.

It has not been possible to deal in this book much of his ideas on education, expressed mostly in the intervening period between the death of Gandhi and the birth of the Bhoodan movement. It may suffice to say here that he stood for a complete overhaul of the educational system, its reorganisation on the principles of Basic Education or Nai Talim, and its complete freedom from state control like judiciary. He expected the teaching community, in particular, to spearhead a nonviolent social revolution in society by playing their legitimate role as an educator of the public.

As regards planning, enough has been said in the book proper in the context of his criticism of the various Plans and his increasing disappointment at their failure to solve the country's problem of colossal unemployment and to better the condition of the weaker segments of society. We have also dealt with his ideas on satyagraha in the context of the changed national and international situation since the days of Gandhi. All that needs no repetition, but it may be pointed out that the critics of his ideas may well prove to be as shortsighted as were the critics of the economic ideas of Gandhi during his life-time. The spiritual thinking of Vinoba with its penetrating insight and habit to see realities beyond appearances may, before long, prove to be correct.

This, in very brief, is Vinoba's contribution to the Gandhian social and political thinking. His name would ever be remembered along with that of Gandhi.

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Page No.	Reference to chapter, Para and line	For	Read
xi	Introduction, 1st Para, line. 4	Gandhi's dream. He	Gandhi's dream and who
xi	Introduction, 1st Para, line. 5	Movement and	Movement, was
4	1st Chapter, 2nd Para, line. 14	his children	His children
4	-do-	his eyes	His eyes
6	1st chapter, 2nd Para, line. 3	It was	It was:
6	1st chapter, 2nd Para, line. 9	Vittyva	Vitthya
7	1st chapter, 2nd Para, line. 4	suggested her	suggested to her
7	1st chapter, 2nd Para, line. 5	Calculating take	calculating to take
8	1st chapter, 1st Para, line. 1	Hene	Hence
14	Chapter II, Para 1, line. 21	quite good	quite a good
15	Chapter II, Para 2, line. 6	Organisation	organisation
18	Chapter II, Para 3, line. 6	Now and then	(to be deleted)
18	Chapter II, Para 3, line. 7	Complied it	complied with it now and then.
19	Chapter III, Para 1, line. 19	observance of life	observance of life itself
25	Chapter IV, Para 1, line. 14	finding that the the enrolled members were not	finding others enrolling members without their
25	Chapter IV, Para 1, line. 15	implications and	implications and the
25	Chapter IV, Para 1, line. 16	Committee and being	Committee being
26	Chapter IV, Para, 1, lines 4 & 5	Sanatanists to change their attitude who were opposed to the entry	Sanatanists, who were opposed to the entry, to change their attitude
27	Chapter IV, Para 2, line. 11	Ordering his life to	Ordering his life accordingly to
32	Chapter V, Para 3, line. 7	headquarter	headquarters
33	Chapter V, Para 2, line 3	bring to spinner	bring to a spinner
34	Chapter V, Para 3, line. 11	mal-nutrition	malnutrition
36	Chapter V, Para 2, line. 24	<i>Shruits</i>	<i>Shrutis</i>

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38	Chapter VI, Para 1, line. 10	Civil Disobedience Movement	civil disobedience movement
38	Chapter VI, Para, 2, line. 1	individual	Individual
40	Chapter VI, Para, 2, line. 7	imperialism in design	imperialist war
40	Chapter VI, Para 3, line. 12	rajya	Rajya
47	Chapter VII, Para 1, line. 1	Instead	instead to
48	Chapter VII, Para 1, line. 4	Movement	movement
48	Chapter VII, Para 2, line. 23	Movement	movement
52	Chapter VIII, Last para, line. 13	the	then
52	Chapter VIII, Last para, line. 14	“if I am. . .	“If I am. . .
53	Chapter VIII, Para 3, line. 8	Government pledged	Government was pledged
62	Chapter VIII, Para 1, line. 7	It instead can	If instead I can
62	Chapter VIII, Last para, line. 4	<i>Vichar-shasan</i>	<i>vichar-shasan</i>
63	Chapter VIII, Para 2, line. 2	Sarvodai	Sarvodayi
63	Chapter VIII, Para 3, line. 11	objection	objections
64	Chapter VIII, Para 2, last line.	deterimental	detrimental
71	Chapter IX, Para 3, line. 10	his idea	his ideas and
76	Chapter IX, Para 1, line. 18	Would have Jerusalem	Would have been Jerusalem
77	Chapter IX, Para 4, line. 5	thereby significance of Leader	thereby its significance for leader
78	Chapter IX, Para 3, line. 2	on route	en route
79	Chapter IX, Para 3, line. 1	Consonance to	consonance with
81	Chapter IX, Para 2, line. 18	previous two days	previous two days
96	Chapter X, Para 1, line. 2		there
99	Chapter X, last para, line. 1	Statement going to the front declared sammelan	Statement declared going to the front as Sammelan
102	Chapter X, Para 1, line. 7	1985	1965
103	Chapter X, Para 2, line. 7	birth-day	birthday
103	Chapter X, Para 3, line. 5	birth-day	birthday
107	Chapter X, Para 2, line. 1	end to the misery	end the misery
107	Chapter X, Para 2, line. 3	Infructuous	infectious
109	Chapter X, Para 3, line. 11	Nonviolence	nonviolence
116	Chapter XI, Para 2, line. 2		

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117	Chapter XI, Para 2, line. 23	He is true product	He is a true product
117	Chapter XI, Para 2, last line.	He is unique	He is a unique
123	Chapter XI, Para 2, line. 2	to accept disarmament	the acceptance of disarmament
123	Chapter XI, Para 2, line. 3	UNO, and the UNO should	UNO for and the UNO to
125	Chapter XII, Para 2, line. 7	which as he	which he
126	Chapter XII, Para 1, line. 5	Ane	And
127	Chapter XII, Para 3, line. 4	place, to giving	place, giving
127	Chapter XII, Para 3, line. 17	word	world
127	Chapter XII, Para 3, line. 20	are far far	are far
129	Chapter XII, Para 2, line. 16	has	had
131	Chapter XII, Para 2, line. 8	In	It
132	Chapter XII, Para 2, line. 7	Say	Saw
133	Chapter XII, Para 3, line. 5	Sena	Seva
133	Chapter XII, Para 3, line. 9	Serva	Sarva
133	Chapter XII, Para 3, line. 11	Serva	Sarva
133	Chapter XII, Para 3, line. 13	sangh	Sangh
134	Chapter XIII, Para 2, line. 10	he realised	he had realised
136	Chapter XIII, Para 2, line. 12	non-changers	no-changers
141	Chapter XIII, Para 3, line. 3	1947	1974
153	Chapter XIV, Para 1, line. 15	also a	also as a
155	Chapter XIV, Para 1, line. 12	that was	were
155	Chapter XIV, Para 2, line. 17	therefore	Therefore
156	Chapter XIV, Para 3, line. 5	instead should	instead it should
159	Chapter XIV, Para 1, line. 1	Bhasha, Indonesian language work,	Bhasa (Indonesian language) work
162	Chapter XIV, Para 2, line. 2 item 4		
167	Chapter XIV, Para 2, line. 3	within State list	within the State list
168	Chapter XIV, Para 2, line. 9	slaughtered numbered	slaughtered annually numbered
168.	Chapter XIV, Para 2, line. 22	perspective	perceptive
170	Chapter XV, Para 2, line. 6	here	There
170	Chapter XV, Para 2, line. 11	on	On

Page No.	Reference to chapter, Para and line	For	Read
171	Chapter XV, Para 1, line. 9	p.m.	P.M.
171	Chapter XV, Para 2, line. 10	pressure was down	pressure down
172	Chapter XV, Para 2, line. 2	<i>nirwana</i>	<i>nirvana</i>
172	Chapter XV, Para 3, line. 4	Gita	the Gita
175	Chapter XVI, Para 2, line. 12	Capable to	capable to
177	Chapter XVI, Para 2, line. 3	gandhi	Gandhi
178	Chapter XVI, Para 1, line. 5	Movement	movement
179	Chapter XVI, Para 2, line. 11	Movement	movement
179	Chapter XVI, Para 1, line. 8	all he	all this he
182	Appendix A, Para 2, Serial 6, line. 2	style of Ishavasyoupa- nishad	style on Ishavasyopa- nishad
183	Appendix A, Para 3, Serial 2, line. 3	the Book	The Book
184	Appendix A, Serial No. 9	<i>Karanta</i>	<i>Kranta</i>
190	Appendix B, Para 2, line. 8	mind	minds
191	Appendix B, Para 2, line. 5	need of an	need of any
191	Appendix B, Para 2, line. 8	and "ill-fare State"	an "ill-fare State
192	Appendix B, Para 1, line. 8	<i>Politics</i>	Polities





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